



# THE ATHENIAN SCHOOL

## *Dean of Experiential Education*

### **SUMMARY**

**Location** | Danville, CA

**Post Date** | January 7, 2021

**Application Deadline** | February 5, 2021 at 5:00pm PST

**Semifinal Round** | Week of February 16

**Final Round** | Week of March 1

**Decision Announced** | March 19, 2021

**Start Date** | July 1, 2021

**Reports To** | Assistant Head of School





## SUMMARY

Internationalism. Democracy. Environmentalism. Adventure. Leadership. Service. These are the pillars of Round Square, an international network of 200+ schools in 50+ countries that The Athenian School co-founded. Athenian, a grades 6-12 day and boarding independent school located on 75 acres near the rolling East Bay hills of the San Francisco Bay Area, has been living out its mission of experiential learning as a Round Square school since 1966.

These six core values are also the pillars of a new role at Athenian: dean of experiential education. The “Pillar Dean,” as this role is affectionately known at Athenian, will be charged with coordinating several all-school experiential learning programs, but more importantly with bringing those experiential principles of learning-by-doing to the core curriculum. Thus, the dean of experiential education will serve as a critical bridge and mentor to middle and upper school faculty. The Pillar Dean, a 12-month role that reports to the assistant head of school / middle school head, starts July 1, 2021.

## THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AT ATHENIAN

### 1. PROGRAM

Athenian will lead the school world in creating the next generation of rigorous, project-based, experiential, and interdisciplinary curricula to deliver the knowledge and skills that students need to both succeed in an information economy and make a meaningful contribution in the world. In doing so, Athenian will be guided by the pillars or IDEALS of Round Square, an organization that Athenian helped found in 1966 and whose pillars continue to guide its curricular and strategic efforts. One initial focus will be a fully integrated community service and engagement program.

### 2. COMMUNITY

Athenian will continue to develop, foster, and sustain an inclusive and diverse school community in which all students, parents, faculty, alumni, and staff can be their authentic selves and thrive, academically, physically, and emotionally. Athenian takes collective responsibility to provide meaningful support to other communities—both local and global.

### 3. RESOURCES

Athenian will position its organizational assets to enable the school to achieve the strategic visions for program, community, and facilities well into the future.



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Athenian School prepares students for the rigorous expectations of college and for a life of purpose and personal fulfillment.

We offer a challenging academic program with a difference: intellectual inquiry is active, learning is interactive, the disciplines are interrelated, and analysis and creativity thrive simultaneously. The acquisition of knowledge becomes authentic and joyous.

We cultivate the personal qualities of each student to become an integrated human being with integrity, strong moral character, aesthetic sensitivity, and physical well-being. The Athenian community requires students to face life directly through open communication, while developing their inner strength to exceed their perceived potential and emerge compassionate, responsible adults.

We instill an appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and cultures, society and the natural world. We value the power and beauty of multiculturalism within our diverse community. We embrace the principles of democratic governance, stewardship of the environment, respect for human dignity, and service as a way of life.

By providing an atmosphere of intellectual, artistic, and physical challenge within the warmth of a nurturing community, we develop in our students the confidence and skills required to meet the complexities of their future.



## ROUND SQUARE

As a founding member of Round Square, an international network of more than 100 schools on six continents, Athenian embraces the philosophy that binds the schools. This philosophy is rooted in six main pillars: International and Multicultural Understanding, Democracy in Action, Environmental Awareness, Adventure, Leadership, and Service.

These values are embedded in everything that Athenian does. Students have countless opportunities to experience and explore these themes. Through the Round Square membership, students have unmatched opportunities to go on exchanges, service trips, and international conferences through sister Round Square schools.



## HISTORY OF ATHENIAN

The Athenian School was founded in 1965 by Dyke Brown, a graduate of Yale Law School, who was then-Vice President of the Ford Foundation. Dyke envisioned a school with the goal of Periclean Athens — the full development of each citizen. Intellectual growth, fitness of body and character, commitment to humane values, aesthetic sensitivity, and readiness for adult citizenship and leadership are Athenian’s objectives for each student.

The Athenian School was built on what was then known as the Blackhawk Ranch, at the foot of Mt. Diablo. It was originally a boarding school, grades nine through twelve, creating a 24/7 community of learners in a rural setting. In 1979, the Middle School was added, accepting day students in grades six through eight. The demand for an Athenian education from the local community prompted the School to begin admitting more day students in the 1970s. Today, along with many new facilities and a larger number of day students, Athenian remains a close-knit family of those actively engaged in a thriving learning community.

Far ahead of his time, Dyke realized the importance of service, international understanding, diversity and adventure as integral parts of a strong academic curriculum. Nearly fifty years later, Athenian's ideals have become a model for education in the 21st century.

Today, more than 140 people live on campus, including students, faculty, staff, children, and their pets. The residential community gathers regularly on and off campus for meals and fun activities. The informal opportunities to spend time with boarding students, colleagues, and residential families foster a warm environment, creating a home away from home for our boarding students. Along with many new facilities and a larger number of day students, Athenian remains a close-knit, thriving learning community.

## STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

Equity, inclusion and diversity are much more than social principles at Athenian; they are educational imperatives. Upholding them is at the core of Athenian’s philosophy and a necessary precursor to meeting our mission goal of graduating culturally competent, global citizens who enter the world as community builders. Therefore, Athenian counts on its students, families, faculty, staff, and board members to support this ideal and respect the diversity of our community of varied race, national and/or ethnic origin, socioeconomic class, faith, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Required course work, all-school activities, student clubs and co-curricular programs advance equity, inclusion, diversity, and social justice at Athenian. Athenian is committed to upholding and protecting the dignity and worth of all people, recognizing everyone’s shared humanity.



## HOW ATHENIAN EDUCATES ITS STUDENTS

The Athenian curriculum focuses on the six Round Square pillars (International and Multicultural Understanding, Democracy in Action, Environmental Awareness, Adventure, Leadership, and Service). Students at Athenian immerse themselves deeply in coursework, inspiring each other to think critically and collaborate as global citizens.

### STUDENTS WILL GRADUATE FROM THE ATHENIAN SCHOOL AS:

**Learners**, who find joy in the acquisition and application of knowledge to practical challenges and develop skills in critical thinking, physical and social-emotional wellness, communication, and project mastery;

**Thinkers**, who acquire a wide breadth of knowledge in the arts, humanities, language, mathematics, and sciences through a rigorous and innovative curriculum;

**Creative problem solvers**, who take responsible risks and engage in interdisciplinary and experiential learning, design thinking, computational thinking, and making;

**Collaborators**, who listen, reflect and express themselves in a variety of modes with purpose, clarity, and excellence; and,

**Community builders and global citizens**, who act in service to others with empathy, honesty, and integrity.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OF AN ATHENIAN EDUCATION

**Critical thinking:** Using data as the object of inquiry, analysis, synthesis, and reflection; Asking open-ended questions and drawing logical conclusions

**Physical & Social-Emotional Wellness:** Adventure experiences; Athletic fitness & competition; Movement expression; Mentorship and apprenticeship; Leadership; Self-advocacy

**Communication:** Written communication; Oral communication and listening skills; Visual expression; Performance

**Project Mastery:** Conceiving and completing projects; Organizing resources and assembling a product; Working independently and in groups; Optimization; Experimenting and failing; Responding to setbacks with resilience





## ROUND SQUARE PILLARS AT ATHENIAN

An Athenian education is built on six Round Square pillars (know by their acronym, IDEALS) that are the foundation for everything the school does. Its mission and pillars encourage students to seek lives of meaning and purpose. Those pillars are:

**Internationalism:** Athenian students build cross-cultural skills that will serve them throughout their lives and help them come to see themselves as global citizens. The campus community includes international students representing nearly 20 countries, and most students participate in an array of international experiences.

**Democracy:** Students have a voice at Athenian and participate actively through town meetings, student forums, and classes like Democracy in Action. Through this hands-on involvement, they learn how to make positive changes in their communities.

**Environmentalism:** Athenian students show respect and care toward the natural environment, and they develop an awareness of problems that they can take an active role in fixing. Students build an understanding of the natural world and the human connection to it.



**Adventure:** In Athenian's outdoor adventure and travel programs, as well as The Athenian Wilderness Experience, students develop teamwork, cross-cultural skills, and the ability to step beyond their comfort zone.

**Leadership:** Through the Athenian experiences, students discover the importance and meaning of leadership, making a positive contribution, acting with integrity, and being of service to others.

**Service:** At Athenian, students develop qualities of volunteerism and compassion through community service and educational programs. Students are encouraged to find ways to apply their individual passions to projects that make a positive difference in the world.



# EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AT ATHENIAN

## GLOBAL EDUCATION

Athenian students build important cross-cultural skills for their future in the global community. On-campus the community and classrooms include international day and boarding students from nearly 20 countries. Far beyond the campus, most students participate in extensive international experiences. Through Round Square, students take part in: an international exchange study, global conferences, and service projects outside the United States. An Athenian education encourages students to appreciate and respect different cultures, religions, and languages other than their own and understand themselves as genuinely global citizens.

## CARTER INNOVATION STUDIO

When it comes to design and engineering centers, at some schools the mantra is: build it, and they will (hopefully) come. At Athenian, the mantra is: we have come to build. The Carter Innovation Studio (CIS) opened in the fall of 2018, and an exciting new chapter began. The CIS is a 5,200 square foot crown jewel that is more than just a STEAM innovation center. The CIS is a hub for fabrication, design, engineering, shop, and computational thinking. The CIS was designed not only to support its own classes, but also to invite existing classes of more traditional disciplines to leverage and incorporate design and engineering principles.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

Service is a key component of the Athenian ethic. Middle School students participate in a variety of community service projects on- and off-campus during Focus Fridays. Projects include the annual olive harvest on campus, volunteering at the food bank, local shoreline clean-ups, and performing puppet-shows for local elementary school students. Students also plan and complete independent projects in seventh and eighth grade. Athenian is currently reimagining the Middle School community service experience to include yearlong themes that are deeply connected to grade-level curricula. In the Upper School, ninth graders participate in weekly on-campus projects in service of the Athenian community. Students also participate in two off-campus service projects on weekend days for the wider community. Examples include serving food at Glide Dining Room, doing trail work on Mount Diablo, and working at the National AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco. In tenth



grade, students continue to work on group projects while taking on increased responsibility. Sophomores organize and lead off-campus service projects during the weekly community service period and participate in two weekend projects. In the spring, students prepare for their junior year intensive (individual service projects) through a series of interactive workshops. Juniors and seniors create their own service projects, demonstrating citizenship and leadership skills.

## FOCUS FRIDAYS

To allow for richer and deeper hands-on experiences that take longer than a class period, the Middle School breaks from its daily schedule every Friday for daylong activities that bring together elements from all classes. Middle School faculty have the unique opportunity to collaborate outside their class and department to create meaningful, interconnected experiences for students. Focus Fridays are one of the hallmarks of Athenian's Middle School experience. Outcomes of Focus Fridays include discoveries of the Round Square pillars, as well as connections to Tony Wagner's Seven Survival Skills, which students will need to be successful in life. Recent course descriptions include:

***Panathanaea:*** Perform a dramatic presentation in handcrafted dress, cook Greek food, participate in an olive harvest, and compete in Olympic Style games in groups representing Greek city-states in this culminating day integrating art, social studies, English, and science.

***Softballs in the gym:*** Spend the day devising creative ways to measure the odd shape of the gymnasium, by exploring how to answer question such as, "How many softballs can fit inside Athenian's gym?"

***Island Day:*** Travel between Pacific Islands (across Athenian's campus) with handmade goods for trade to experience the trade system firsthand.

***Scratch Programming:*** Develop an own interactive animation program using Scratch, a powerful drag-and-drop programming language.

***Field Trips:*** Search for geological evidence at Sibley Volcano, practice navigation skills while hiking in Las Trampas, volunteer at the Alameda County Food Bank, visit the Asian Art Museum, explore the chaparral of Black Diamond Mine, and visit the Immigration Station on Angel Island.





## MARCH TERM

All Upper School students engage in one immersive mini-term class of their choosing, diving deeply into a subject area they otherwise would not get to explore in high school. While half of the junior class is in Death Valley, the rest of the school encounters experiential, hands-on learning opportunities that can only exist outside of the standard block schedule. March Term courses are elective credits with different course offerings every year based on faculty and student interests.

In these three-week mini-classes, students dive into a variety of immersive experiences. These courses may include international and local travel, hands-on student-driven projects, service work, and independent inquiry. Recent courses include: Architecture Using Reusable Materials; Bay Area Activism; Bearing Witness: Exploring the Holocaust through History & Art; California Water; Language & Culture of China & Taiwan; Practice of Poetry; South Africa: Making Democracy Post-Apartheid; and, Spanish Immersion.

## THE ATHENIAN WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

Athenian develops in its students resilience and empathy, which are critical for their success in life. The Athenian Wilderness Experience (AWE) program lets students explore the beauty and enchantment of either the high Sierra Mountains or the Death Valley desert during their junior year. Students learn to collaborate, problem-solve, empathize, and believe in each other as they navigate off-trail terrain, cook group meals, rock climb, and set up camp during a 26-day remote adventure of a lifetime. This experience includes a



three-day, three-night period when students are given a small area with defined boundaries in which they spend that time completely alone.

## CLASS TRIPS

Class trips are an important part of an Athenian education. School groups travel within California and to the East Coast to learn more about the country and the planet. In the spring, sixth graders spend three days bonding during camping, rock climbing, and geology lessons as a class in Pinnacles National Monument. Seventh graders choose from regional trips that emphasize service and outdoor adventure. Recent trips have taken students to the Catalina Islands and Redwood Glen to learn about the California coast, kayak, and spend quality time together as a class and with their teachers. Eighth graders see their U.S. history and English curriculum come to life with a trip to Washington, D.C. After a year of study, students will experience the life and times of the founding of our country during a thorough exploration of the nation's capital.



# BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITIES

## THE PILLAR DEAN

Reporting to the assistant head / head of middle school — and working in close partnership with the assistant head / head of upper school — the dean of experiential education will be responsible for developing and implementing an integrated experiential curriculum (6-12) that honors the six pillars (or IDEALS) of Round Square. This work will require building connections between many of Athenian’s signature programs.

An astute applicant might wonder, after reviewing this document and Athenian’s website, why a school with such a rich history of learning by doing would now be creating a dean of experiential education. The answer, in part, is that this role is part of a larger initiative at Athenian to intentionally gently ignite winds of integration and influence across several domains. Most of these changes are occurring right now or just recently occurred. They include:

- The new Carter Innovation Studio, which is only a few years old and is bringing principles of design, engineering, and fabrication to all students at Athenian;
- A full-time Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice position, which will be hired this coming spring to deepen Athenian’s commitment to DEIS; and,
- A restructuring of the leadership team, which has elevated the divisional directors to assistant heads as they taken on greater oversight of 6-12 programs and initiatives.

These and other changes at Athenian reflect an authentic desire to deepen the school’s commitment not just to the six Round Square pillars, but to bringing the teaching and learning program to an even greater level of excellence. Thus, this new role has been nicknamed the “Pillar Dean,” as Athenian views this role as inextricably tied to the pillars.

## EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Constituents at Athenian have many hopes and desires for the Pillar Dean, which will require an experienced educator. During recent interviews, some ideas included:

*How might the Pillar Dean help Athenian reimagine **community service**, by bringing principles of service learning into traditional courses, developing yearlong themes tied to grade-level curricula, creating a 6-12 community service arc, and deepening local community engagement?*

*How might the Pillar Dean help to reframe **experiential education** and create win-win partnerships with external constraints like the college admission process, which for Athenian should be bolstered, and never hampered, by a rich experiential learning program?*



*How might the Pillar Dean expand the school's focus on **outdoor education** and **environmentalism**, which for some are synonymous primarily with the Athenian Wilderness Experience, and help students and faculty leverage more modest opportunities that are right nearby — including taking advantage of Athenian's spectacular indoor/outdoor campus?*

*How might the Pillar Dean help ensure the school maintains its integrity with the **pillars**, by creating opportunities and presenting ideas for faculty to explore new ideas around project-based learning and interdisciplinary curricula?*

*How might the Pillar Dean help the school deepen its commitment to **globalism** and **cultural competency**, from showcase initiatives like overseas trips to everyday opportunities embedded in the on-campus boarder program, which comprises dozens of international students?*

*How might the Pillar Dean help catalyze new **experimental courses** in existing programs like Focus Fridays — which is well-established in the Middle School — and March Term — which is just in its second year in the Upper School — and then take the next step of finding ways to develop full-term courses and learning units built upon ideas from those alternative programs?*

*How might the Pillar Dean serve on the one hand as a **director of studies** for experiential education, connecting broad 6-12 arcs of learning, while on the other hand as an **instructional designer** working hand-in-hand with individual faculty — particularly with new teachers who sometimes need additional support to acculturate to Athenian's rich legacy of learning by doing?*

Without a doubt, many exciting opportunities and challenges await the inaugural dean of experiential education. The right person will bring a successful track record around curriculum development, experiential learning, global studies, social justice, faculty mentorship, pedagogy training, and project-based learning. The Pillar Dean must be able to oversee curriculum and programs, but also influence and support individual teachers and work alongside faculty during specific lessons and projects.

Although prior experience in a school like Athenian is not required, the dean of experiential education must bring not only an understanding of, but also a passionate respect for, the pillars of Round Square. To that end, the success of this role will depend on the Pillar Dean's ability to first build authentic relationships with faculty and administrators, and then help the school deepen its commitment to those pillars. For anyone who is passionate about experiential education in middle and high school, this opportunity is one not to pass up.





## KEY STATISTICS

**Founded:** 1965

**Campus:** Athenian's 75-acre campus of rolling, oak-covered hills lies at the base of Mt. Diablo State Park in Danville, CA just 32 miles east of San Francisco.

**Students:** Approximately 530 students attend Athenian in grades 6 through 12 (175 students in middle school; 360 students in high school), including nearly 60 upper school boarding students coming from 16 countries on five continents. 100% of Athenian students who apply to four-year colleges are admitted.

**Faculty and Staff:** Athenian employs over 76 full- and part-time faculty, with a faculty-to-student ratio of 9:1. Approximately 74% of teachers have advanced degrees.

**Diversity:** Nearly 59% of students come from self-identified families of color. Over 30% of faculty are people of color.

**Admission:** An acceptance rate of 48% and a yield of 89%

**Accreditation:** California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

**Relevant Associations and Memberships:** National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS); California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS); California Teacher Development Collaborative (CATDC); Council for Advancement and Support of Educations (CASE); Round Square (RS); Green Schools Alliance (GSA); Bay Area Green Business Program; Bay Area BlendEd Consortium

**Financial Aid:** 24% of the student body receives financial aid totaling \$3.5 million.

**Financials:** Operating budget approximately \$24M; Endowment approximately \$10M

**Website:** [www.athenian.org](http://www.athenian.org)



## QUOTE FROM THE ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

*"We have many outstanding experiential education programs at Athenian. The exciting charge for the Pillar Dean is to leverage and connect these programs across disciplines and grade levels in order to make an even broader impact on our community."*

**Lauren Railey, Assistant Head of School / Middle School Head**



# DEAN OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

## SPECIFIC DUTIES

### ***Program Management***

- Under the direction of the assistant head / head of middle school, and in close consultation with the assistant head / head of upper school, lead a thoughtful and comprehensive integration of the six Round Square pillars into the school's curriculum and programs.
- Oversee the operations and management of following programs: March Term (Upper School), Focus Fridays (Middle School), and Community Service and Engagement (Upper and Middle School).
- Lead the development of a unified 6-12 curricular arc for March Term, Focus Fridays, and Community Service and Engagement, and help integrate those programs into core disciplines and other parts of the curriculum.
- Ensure, through ongoing and clear communication, that the community understands the pillars of Round Square and Athenian's commitment to them.

### ***Faculty Partnership***

- Support and inspire faculty members in both divisions to develop and implement experiential projects and nontraditional curriculum.
- Serve as an instructional design partner and mentor to teachers.
- Partner with other leaders of 6-12 experiential programs, including the directors of Athenian Wilderness Experience, Carter Innovation Studio, and Round Square Exchange, to help integrate those programs, and the Round Square pillars they represent, into Athenian's curriculum and programs.
- Establish and maintain thoughtful curricular and programmatic partnerships — regionally, nationally, and internationally.

### ***General Leadership and Instruction***

- Explore the implementation of a portfolio tool for students to exhibit their mastery in a Round Square Pillar focus.
- Teach students during Focus Fridays and March Term courses.
- Serve on committees as directed, including the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Professional Development Committee.



## **ATHENIAN IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE...**

### ***Professional Qualifications and Experience:***

- Possession of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, though a graduate degree or advanced coursework in curriculum development would be highly desirable
- Demonstrated teaching excellence of middle school or high school students, preferably in an independent school environment
- Five or more years of teaching or director-level experience, preferably in a school
- A successful history of creating and leading experiential, project-based, interdisciplinary, and hands-on projects, instruction, and learning opportunities
- Experience with curriculum design, innovative pedagogy, and assessment
- Proven commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice

### ***Leadership and Personal Qualities:***

- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Demonstrated experience in developing and implementing new programs, and in managing others to high expectations as those programs are carried out
- Commitment to and facility with faculty support, professional development, and leadership
- Commitment to the integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, and cultural competency within a curriculum

### ***Preferred, though not required:***

- Experience with budget oversight and other financial and human resource matters
- Experience in a Round Square school or institution with a similar mission
- Expertise in effective and equitable recruitment and hiring practices
- Technology competence and integration
- Knowledge of the college process and students' admissions needs
- Familiarity with student wellness issues and an understanding of how academic rigor and student wellness can be symbiotic



## HOW TO APPLY

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of Athenian to identify exceptional leaders in experiential education to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Please direct any inquiries to:

Gabriel Lucas  
Principal, 12M Recruiting  
[jobs@12MRecruiting.com](mailto:jobs@12MRecruiting.com)

### APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED THROUGH FEBRUARY 5, 2021.

All applications must be submitted online, via:

[www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/DEE](http://www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/DEE)

An application requires submitting four PDFs:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to the Athenian 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:

*Propose two experiential educational opportunities that you would want to offer in your first year as Athenian's Pillar Dean: (1) a one-day Focus Friday experience for Middle School students, and (2) a three-week March Term course for Upper School students. How would you thoughtfully incorporate two of Athenian's six Round Square pillars into the Focus Friday experience, and two different pillars into the March Term course? Finally, how would you use these courses to showcase the potential for teachers of traditional academic disciplines to incorporate principles of experiential education into their classes?*

*The Athenian School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, faith, sex, gender or gender expression, age, ability, sexual orientation, familial or marital status. The Athenian School is actively seeking to create a more culturally diverse school community and as such, we encourage people of color and members of the LGBTIQ community to apply. Athenian's salary and benefits are competitive and include medical, vision, and dental insurance, a retirement plan, a smoke-free environment, and a daily prepared lunch.*