



The Putney School

Head of School

The Putney School, a mixed-gender boarding and day school serving students in grades 9-12 located in Putney, Vermont, is eager to welcome nominations and applications for an innovative, thoughtful, and inspiring leader to serve as its next Head of School effective July 1, 2022.

ABOUT THE PUTNEY SCHOOL

Since its founding in 1935, [The Putney School](#) has been at the forefront of the progressive school movement. With a mission to develop active, critical thinkers and members of a democratic society, Putney takes a holistic approach to education. In addition to a rigorous academic program, students participate actively in running the school, work on Putney's 500-acre [Elm Lea Farm](#), participate in sports, apprentice with local artisans, and express themselves through the performing arts, becoming the makers of their own education.

Social justice has been a core value at Putney since its founding. Committed to building an inclusive community that respects and affirms each of its members, Putney honors diversity of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. While conflicts may arise in the creation of such a community, these conflicts are seen as opportunities for growth, for open and honest communication, and for learning. With sustainability, community building, and diversity woven into the fabric of life at Putney, students develop a well-rounded view of the world and the skills needed to thrive in and shape it.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the Putney School [enrolled](#) 231 students from 26 states and 17 different countries. Boarding students represent 72 percent of the total student population, and 19 percent of the student body identify as students of color. Putney prides itself on small class sizes and a close-knit [campus community](#) where students and teachers develop strong relationships that last far beyond graduation.

At Putney, the curriculum encompasses the full range of student activities. Most employees engage with students and with teaching. Of the 35 full-time teaching [faculty](#), 30 have advanced degrees. These committed educators enjoy working with students and value their time together. Putney teachers believe that connecting with students, helping them realize their passions and potential, is essential work at an important time in our history.

PUTNEY'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

The Putney School was founded in 1935 by Carmelita Hinton, a progressive education pioneer. She distilled the school's philosophy into these nine fundamental beliefs:

To work not for marks, badges, or honors; but to discover truth and to grow in human understanding and knowledge of the universe, to treasure the hard stretching of oneself, to render service.

To learn to appreciate and participate in the creative arts, where we give expression to our struggle for communication of our inner lives and for beauty, and to grant these arts great prestige.

To believe in manual labor, be glad to do one's share of it and proud of the skills learned in the doing.

To play just as wholeheartedly as one works, but watching out a bit for the competitive angle, remembering that play is for recreation and an increased joy in living.

To want to lend a hand to the community at large, not to live in an "ivory tower."

To combat prejudice and injustice wherever it appears; to strive for a world outlook, putting oneself in others' places, no matter how far away or how remote.

To have old and young work together in a true comradeship relation, stressing the community and its need for the cooperation of all.

To steward and protect the land, to seek ways to live on the earth that are healthy for all beings, and to shape our community as a model of sustainable living.

To wish to live adventurously though not recklessly, willing to take risks, if need be, for moral growth, so that one definitely progresses along the long slow road toward achieving a civilization worthy of the name.

— From Carmelita Hinton's 1954 letter to alumni amended June 2019

A PUTNEY EDUCATION

The Putney School recognizes that all students learn differently. When it comes to learning, one size does not fit all, so close attention is paid to the individual learning styles of each student. Faculty and staff help students develop the tools, self-awareness, and advocacy skills necessary to become confident, active, and independent learners within The Putney Core, and through experiential education, project-based learning, the arts, and the work program. With an average class size of 11 and a student/teacher ratio of 11:1, Putney teachers can serve the individual needs of every student. Each student's advisor works with the teachers and academic dean to ensure that both the student and family understand the student's development and to identify areas of strength and areas in need of improvement as demonstrated in teachers' written reports. At the end of each trimester, a team of deans and advisors carefully reviews each student's reports, assesses their performance and progress, and determines what further support a student might need if they are not thriving academically. Students do not learn their academic grades until the winter of their Junior year. In addition to letter grades, students receive effort marks with their written reports for their work during each marking period. Effort marks are important in determining the list of seniors eligible for special privileges and in identifying students about whom the deans should be concerned.

The Putney Core

The [Putney Core](#) outlines the skills, knowledge, and understanding essential to a Putney education and necessary for graduation. Designed to move away from a prescriptive education to one that is more flexible and student driven, it is a proficiency-based system which requires students to show progress and proof of their learning through a digital portfolio. A Putney diploma represents four years of planned secondary school study and can be completed in one or more years. In addition to successful completion of the baseline requirements outlined by the Putney Core, students will define and pursue other areas of individual interest.



An Inclusive Education

Putney embraces and encourages awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the expression of diverse experiences, and has since its founding. Inclusivity is a fundamental principle of the school and it is lived out in every aspect of school life and programs—in admissions and hiring, in the academic and residential curriculum, and in the moral development and interpersonal relationships of all members of the community.

Putney fosters intellectual freedom and knows that for students to become their best selves, they must feel welcome, comfortable, and included in every part of the school culture. Effective support services are available to affirm and ensure the safety, dignity, and welfare of every individual and group on campus.

Putney encourages free expression of a student's own identity in the larger community, offering opportunities to explore cultural differences and commonalities through respectful and civil discussion and reflection in assemblies and presentations, as well as through off-campus social events, leadership workshops, and overseas school trips.

The Student Diversity Committee on campus and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of the Board ensure that the school promotes diversity through its program and hiring, recognizing that a diverse faculty and staff is crucial to the success of the school and the fullest possible education of its students. Putney was one of the first boarding schools in the Northeast to enroll students of color. Its tradition of active, principled social and political engagement placed the school in the forefront of the drive for social justice in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, and continues today.

An Experiential Education

At Putney, students learn to be active participants in their own education and the community they help create.

Putney believes that students are trustworthy and capable members of the community. Students are empowered to take a role in everything from governance with the Board of Trustees to the assignment and oversight of work jobs to discipline. They learn what it means to wrestle with hard questions, to participate fully in the life of a community, and to embrace and seek solutions to conflicts.

Allowing students to take hold of their education through personal responsibility builds character and resilience that ensures their success. With shared work and leadership, they learn the importance of community as well as their role in it. They also learn the value of their individuality. To move within the world with confidence, graduates will know the merit of collaboration over competition and how work is a vital part of everyday life.

Project-Based Learning

[Project Weeks](#) are a cornerstone of the Putney curriculum and continue to serve as a model for project-based learning across the country. They are intensive, 7–9-day periods, which occur twice a year. Students pursue independent projects inspired by curiosity and tied to their academic coursework. They are challenged to research deeply, forge connections between disciplines, and communicate their work in compelling ways.



Work Program

Putney believes that contributing to the community is a source of both learning and joy. The work program has been a part of Putney since its founding; it teaches leadership, teamwork, stewardship, and grit. The [work program](#) provides a setting where students can further their understanding of the relationship between work, home, and community life. The result of participation is empowerment. Students learn how to do activities that form the foundation of life and the living of it.

Afternoon Program

The [afternoon activities](#) program offers a variety of ways for students to be active and to engage with and enjoy the outdoors. All students participate in afternoon activities. Options include team sports, co-ed recreational sports activities, and afternoon work activities.

The Arts Program

The arts are a vital part of the Putney program. Academic courses are offered in visual and performing arts and music and emphasize both the development of the student's creative voice as well as technical mastery. Many students also take private music lessons.

The [Evening Arts Program](#) provides a wide range of arts-based classes after dinner, offering students the opportunity to further explore a creative outlet. This program offers students the chance to try something entirely new, or to delve more deeply into an art form, be it visual or performing arts, for which they have already developed a passion. These classes are often led by wonderful local artists in the community.

Once a week the entire school community gathers for [Sing](#), a powerful and joyful celebration of community. Sing has been a part of the Putney program since the very beginning. It has served as a forum to explore the diverse cultures of members of the community as well as to debate secularism, religion, spirituality, and the meaning of progressive education.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Founded as a progressive school, social justice has been a core value at Putney since its founding. It continues to build an educational program that recognizes and values the many peoples and perspectives of their community and the world. While conflicts may arise in the creation of such a community, these conflicts are seen as opportunities for growth, for open and honest communication, and for learning. Through the commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion The Putney School community prepares students for the challenges and choices they will face as citizens of the world.

The Putney School seeks to ensure that all aspects of student school life—including admissions, curriculum, residential life, evening arts, and athletics reflect its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. School leaders recognize that their school and students exist in an ever-changing world, and that the understanding of, and support for, diversity, equity, and inclusion will grow and evolve.

The faculty, staff and Board are working to understand what it means to commit to being anti-racist, and specifically to being anti-Blackness, and recognize that they must do more as an institution.

10 Year Vision Statement

In 2026, Putney will be a diverse community in which cultural, language, and ethnic distinctions will be cultivated and celebrated. The school culture will be one of curiosity, contemplation, engagement, and dialogue, sending out graduates who can work collaboratively across race, class, and cultural divides. To address the challenges Putney faces, they must remain unique. They must extend the integration of their land use programs, arts and academics in ways that reflect their progressive tradition and the needs of a complex world. They must offer an educational experience that is outstanding and that teaches and enriches the lives of young people in ways that are not possible elsewhere. They must live their mission and ideals to the fullest.

As part of The Putney School's commitment to establishing a culture of anti-racism, equity and inclusion, the Head of School and the Board of Trustees has committed to sending regular updates on their progress on DEI initiatives. The most recent update was sent to the Putney community in January 2021 and is found [here](#). Additionally, Putney has committed to continue to work on cultural integration and social justice education on campus. The Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair has identified the Board's [goals, accomplishments, and next steps](#) as they relate to DEI initiatives at Putney.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Putney School is deeply committed to [sustainability](#). Respect for the environment is embedded in the program, and the campus serves as a laboratory and subject for many classes and activities. The school is moving toward a net-zero campus, with the installation of a 446-kW solar array. The Field House, completed in 2009 is a net-zero, LEED Platinum-certified building. The Master Plan includes many additional initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of the entire campus.

LIFE AT PUTNEY

The Putney community lives, works, and learns on Elm Lea Farm, a 500-acre working dairy farm. The campus is in the country but is not isolated. Playing fields for sports, and miles of wooded trails for hiking, biking, skiing, and riding, campfires, birdwatching and thinking abound. There are acres of organic vegetable gardens, and, of course, the dairy barn built by students, faculty, and staff in Putney's early years. The campus includes ten dorms and five solar-powered cabins. The dorms range in size, and are each home to 10 to 30 students, and the cabins have space for two senior students. Many dorm parents have children, so the dorms feel like a home away from home.



Living and learning on a working dairy farm presents students and faculty with a unique school experience. Each semester, more than 60 students are part of Putney's Farm program. The students are engaged in all aspects of the diversified farm, including milking, and caring for dairy cattle, foraging crop production, gardening, livestock care, sugaring, and firewood processing.



There are more than 30 dairy cows that are milked and cared for twice a day, every day, by students. The student work crews are led by student "barn heads" who are responsible for attendance, delegating work, and quality assurance. Students working in the dairy barn learn how to milk cows, and feed cows and calves. The students interact with other animals including 8 pigs, 18 horses, 135 chickens, 13 sheep and 4 alpacas.

LOCATION

The Putney School is situated in [Putney, Vermont](#), about two hours northwest of Boston. Putney is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is home to a wide array of activities from hiking and biking trails, orchards, a vineyard, and quaint country stores and family-run businesses.



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Most of the members of the [Board of Trustees](#) at Putney are graduates of the school or parents of current or past students. Consistent with Putney's commitment to engage students with real dilemmas and decisions, there are student members of the Board who are full voting members. These motivated and engaged student leaders bring their understanding and expertise as members of the student body to bear on discussions ranging from building plans to investment policy.



ENDOWMENT AND OPERATING EXPENSES

As of summer 2019, the Putney School endowment was valued at \$28M. It is the school's policy to annually draw 3.5% of the value of the endowment to support school operations. The balance of the fund is reinvested with a goal of preserving and growing the value of Putney's endowment relative to inflation.

Financial Snapshot (2019-2020)

Boarding Tuition	\$66,100
Day Tuition	\$38,900
Financial Aid Awarded	\$2,856,900
Percentage of Students Receiving Need-based Aid	39.8%
Annual Operating Expenses	\$11,969,573
Total Endowment Value	\$32,293,944(1Q/FY21)
Endowment per Student	\$152,358
Endowment Rate of Return	5.1%
Annual Fund and Other Operating Gifts	\$1,1750,000
Other Income (summer programs, etc.)	\$1,968,779*
<i>*Includes one-time PPP loan forgiveness of 1,580,150. Other Income more typically falls around \$1.2 million</i>	

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Putney School's leadership knows that it must remain unique. The school must extend the integration of its land use programs, arts and academics in ways that reflect their progressive tradition and the needs of a complex world. Its leaders must offer an educational experience that is outstanding and that teaches and enriches the lives of young people in ways that are not possible elsewhere. They live their mission and ideals to the fullest. Building on the [10 Year Vision Statement](#), Putney provides an educational program that recognizes and values the many peoples and perspectives of their community and the world.

THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Putney's Head of School oversees all aspects of its academic and operational programs, reports to the Board of Trustees, and lives in community with students and faculty on Putney's residential campus. They lead a senior administrative team comprised of the Academic Dean, Assistant Head of School/ CFO, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Students, Director of Admission and Financial Aid, Director of Communication and Marketing, Director of Development, and the Director of Equity and Inclusion.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Head of School will provide strategic leadership and direction for all aspects of the School's educational programs and operational sustainability. They will play a critical role in addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

- **Articulating the vision, mission, and philosophy of Putney's progressive educational and residential model.** The Head of School will be an inspiring thought leader who engages multiple audiences in person, in writing, and by example, to set the present and future direction for progressive education at Putney. Specifically, alignment of the Putney Core's philosophy and daily execution is critical to Putney's overall educational vision. Especially as the world emerges from a global pandemic, the next Head of School will be poised to make the case for a boarding school education.

- **Celebrating, supporting, attracting, and retaining a diverse community.** Since its founding, Putney has demonstrated and lived its commitment to social justice and inclusion. Attracting and retaining students and faculty from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds is a priority consistent with Putney's mission. The Head of School must be a conversant learner and demonstrated leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion issues of ability, class, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation.
- **Aligning and communicating Putney's philanthropic priorities.** The Head of School will articulate a strategy and engage in a strategic planning process with the Board that harmonizes with and supports the Putney's 10-Year Vision Statement. In so doing, the Head of School will be a creative, resourceful, and ambitious partner to the Board as it continues its \$35M capital campaign. They will inspire friends of the school to think about the power of philanthropy and engagement in ways that sustain Putney for generations to come.
- **Embracing the culture of student and adult autonomy and building strategic operational capacity.** At Putney, the range of opportunity for student and adult learning and doing is nearly limitless. The next Head of School must balance the abundance of options for all community members to participate in decision-making with developing empowered operations and leadership teams to foster freedom within efficient and sustainable frameworks.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate for the Head of School position will demonstrate the following qualities of leadership and stewardship:

- Lead, inspire and sustain a vibrant, creative, residential learning community.
- Celebrate and prioritize the student experience, empowering students to shape their community while understanding the role and impact of technology in student development
- Articulate, inspire, and support a fluent vision for progressive education in a post-pandemic boarding school setting
- Prioritize and affirm Putney's foundational commitment to equity and anti-racism at Putney and in the world
- Balance Putney's culture of creative, flexible holistic education with efficient and effective organizational processes
- Build effective teams and empower school leaders across the community in their roles
- Embrace the natural environment and its unique role in educating adolescents and inspiring adults
- Engage multiple audiences and constituencies to philosophically and financially support and sustain Putney's distinct community and progressive approach to educating students, supporting faculty, and preserving its surroundings.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The search committee for The Putney School's Head of School position will begin accepting nominations and reviewing applications immediately. Requested application materials include a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and professional reference list. References will not be called without explicit permission.

Although applications will be welcomed until a new Head of School is selected, for best consideration, all candidates should submit materials by July 19 to: PutneyHoS@storbecksearch.com.

The Putney School is being assisted in this search by [Storbeck Search](#). For additional information, please contact:



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