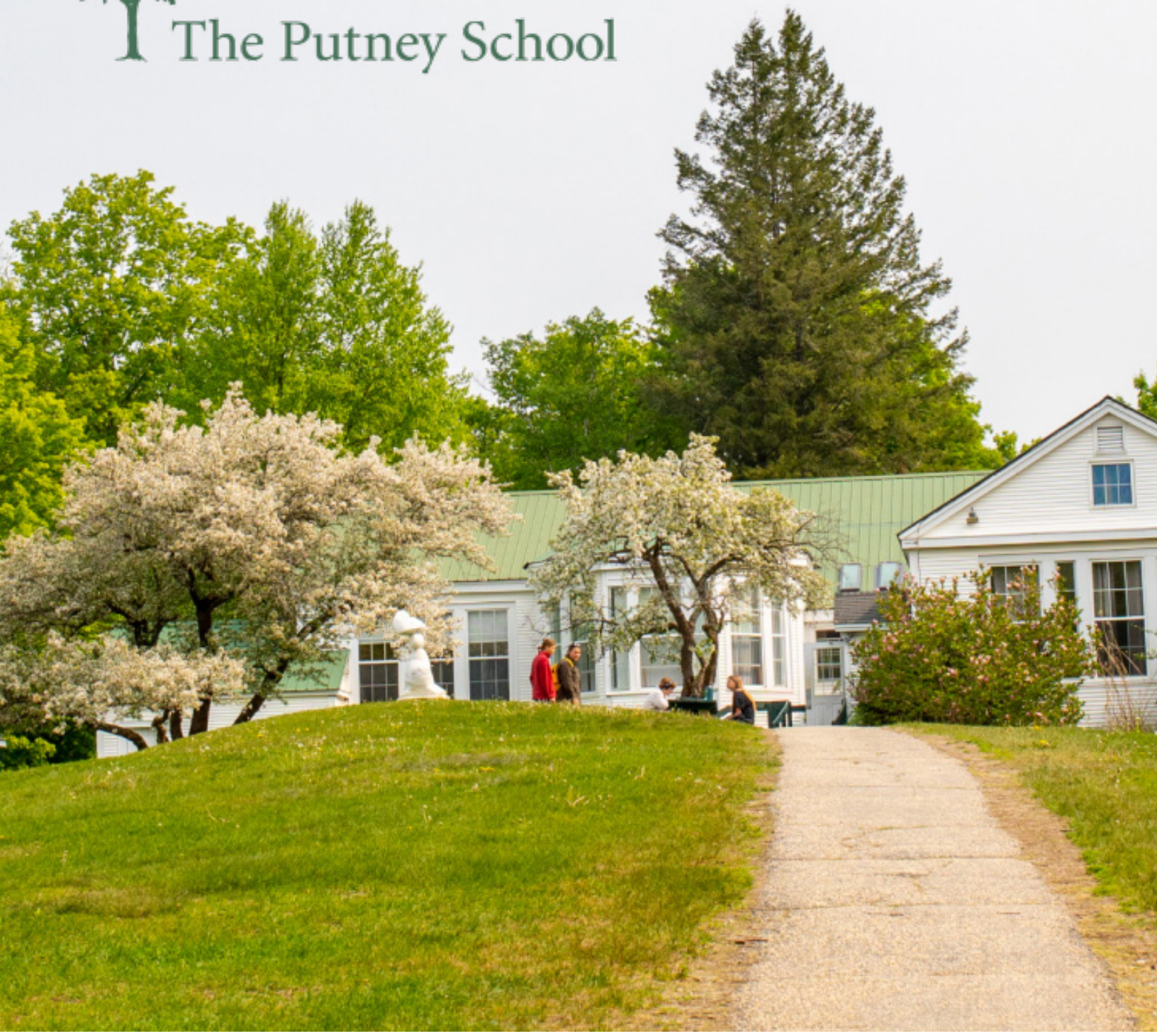
The Putney School



INTERIM HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

Putney, Vermont

Position Starts January 2027



MISSION

The Putney School stands for a way of life. Putney is committed to developing each student's full intellectual, artistic and physical potential. Putney students are encouraged to challenge themselves intellectually, to pursue rigorous learning for its own sake, to actively participate in and appreciate the arts, to contribute meaningfully to the work program that sustains the school community and the farm on which it is located, to engage in vigorous athletics, and to develop a social consciousness and world view that will provide the foundation for life-long moral and intellectual growth.

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS - *since the founding of The Putney School*

To work not for marks, badges, or honors, but to discover truth and 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.



OVERVIEW

Founded in 1935 with a mission to "create active, critical thinkers and members of a democratic society," The Putney School is one of the most respected progressive high schools in the country, encouraging students to develop agency of their own learning through student-centered, democratically-led classrooms; a robust work program that includes a working dairy farm; extensive offerings in the arts; and opportunities for leadership that far surpass most high school programs. Situated on 600 spectacular acres with sweeping mountain views in southern Vermont, The Putney School is inspirational in both its ethos and its location.

Everything at Putney stems from its progressive core, supporting the belief that "in order to have a democracy citizens should actively participate in the decisions that will impact their lives, whether economic, social, or political." 185 boarding and day students enjoy the freedom of self-directed learning and the inspiration of exceptional teachers to guide that learning. Alumni are passionate about their Putney education and grateful for its lifelong impact.

The work program; the farm; the arts; beloved Putney traditions; the expectation of community participation and support; a vast array of leadership opportunities; and rigorous, self-directed academics that encourage agency in learning are regularly named by current and past students as what they love the most about their school.



ABOUT THE POSITION

The Putney School Board of Trustees has launched the search for the school's Interim Head of School, who will begin January 3, 2027, or as soon as possible, for a tenure that will end June 2028. The Interim Head will have the opportunity to set the stage for the school's next long-term Head of School. Putney offers a remarkable academic and co-curricular program allowing students to create their own learning experiences within the parameters of clear expectations for community participation and responsibility, as well as provocative intellectual and artistic challenges.

The Interim Head of School will bring progressive school experience, preferably at the 9-12 level in a boarding environment, and/or deep knowledge of The Putney School, and proven administrative and leadership experience in schools. Candidates will have demonstrated interpersonal EQ; cultural competence; facility with finance, enrollment, and/or fundraising; capacity to create and communicate vision; experience partnering with a Board; and strong leadership, management, and capacity-building skills. They will also engage meaningfully with students.

QUICK FACTS

- Progressive co-ed boarding and day school
- 185 students
- Founded in 1935 on dairy farm; now a 600-acre campus
- 5:1 student:cow ratio
- #1 private high school in Vermont (Niche.com)
- 30+ nations represented on campus
- 98% graduates go on to attend four-year colleges

MORE ABOUT THE PUTNEY SCHOOL

- School website
- Fundamental Beliefs
- Progressive Education
- Student Leadership
- DEIB at Putney
- Elm Lea Farm // The Work Program
- Academics
- The Arts



LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Putney School Board of Trustees has launched the search to identify an Interim Head of School to follow the current Head of School, Danny O'Brien, who has decided to step out of his headship at calendar year's end (December 2026). The Interim position will begin January 3, 2027 or as soon as possible.

Sally Mixsell of Educators Collaborative, LLC is assisting the Board in this search. Based on a community-wide survey and a two-day visit to learn about the school and interview many of its key stakeholders, Sally offers the descriptors below that represent community-wide sentiments about Putney's strengths, the challenges and opportunities lying ahead, and the skills and attributes desired in the next Head of School.

PUTNEY, VERMONT

Putney, Vermont is a scenic town of approximately 2,600 people in southern Vermont. With a town center ("Putney Village") on the National Register of Historic Places, Putney hosts the campuses of The Putney School, Landmark College, The Greenwood School (boarding, 6-12 boys with dyslexia or related language-based learning issues), The Grammar School (K-8, coed, day), and the local public school (PK-8), Putney Central School.

Ten miles south of Putney, the larger town of Brattleboro (population approx. 12,000) offers additional shopping, dining, and cultural activities to those in area towns. There is also an Amtrak station in Brattleboro, allowing easy north-south travel from the Canadian border down the East Coast of the U.S. Interstate 91, which goes through Putney, also allows for easy north-south travel. There are buses that travel east-west, but driving is often the better option.

Of course, Putney - and Vermont in general - offers beautiful mountain views and outdoor activities. Many Vermont ski resorts are within easy driving distance of the school. For more information, please see the link above.



STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

Core Educational Philosophy and Progressive Approach: Maintaining the school's unique identity, freedom, and student autonomy is paramount to the success of the school, ensuring a balance of academic rigor and critical thinking with creativity and community values. Putney's commitment to offering a progressive education that includes project-based learning and hands-on experiential learning contributes to its reputation as a unique offering among so many more traditional boarding schools.

Farm and Work Programs: Putney fosters community responsibility, practical life skills, sustainability, and a strong work ethic through the dairy farm, gardens, and work program that play an integral part in each student's experience. For many graduates, the work program has been a key factor in their transformational time at The Putney School.

Quality of Faculty and Community: The passion and dedication of Putney's teachers and staff are evident in the way they mentor students and champion the school's ethos. They foster an inclusive and welcoming community that prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) alongside student leadership and mutual trust.

Arts and Traditions: Putney's array of arts offerings—from studio art and theater to blacksmithing and fiber arts—is impressive and can be seen all over campus. These offerings, coupled with long-standing traditions such as their recently-celebrated Harvest Festival serve as core components of the Putney experience and student development.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE INTERIM HEAD OF SCHOOL

Community and Culture: Putney has held on tightly to its core traditions, culture, and progressive values through some recent difficulties that have diminished trust within the community. This is a time for addressing issues raised, establishing clear expectations of accountability, and rebuilding the close-knit and respectful community that is so critical to Putney's success.

Fiscal Health: In this era of challenging times for boarding schools, it will be imperative to keep an eye on ensuring the school's long-term financial health through strategic enrollment, fundraising, and resource management. The recent capital campaign's success in surpassing the $40 million goal suggests deep enthusiasm and support from Putney's community.

Enrollment and Marketing: With new Directors of Admissions and Communications and Marketing there is a wonderful opportunity to work together on creating ways of communicating Putney's high-quality student and faculty experience in the broad marketplace.

Clarifying Expectations and Accountability: As with many schools, clear expectations and, by extension, accountability for one's actions developed fuzzy parameters in the years following the pandemic. Many in the community would like to see clarification of what is expected—in one's job, behavior, and responsibility for follow-through, at both student and adult levels. Clarity around lines of communication is also desired, both internally and externally.



Faculty Support and Retention: Faculty and staff have always been the rockbed of student experience at Putney, and recent departures have been felt deeply. Establishing, as stated above, clear expectations and increasing support in areas of adult growth and development will be key to retaining good people at Putney, as will managing current enrollment and financial challenges with finesse.

ATTRIBUTES & EXPERIENCE DESIRED IN THE INTERIM HEAD

Progressive Education Experience, Preferably in a Boarding School: The Interim Head must have background in progressive education or must at least understand and value progressive education deeply. They will maintain the unique culture, ethos, and community of Putney in balance with responsibility for enrollment, fundraising, and finance. Experience in boarding school is strongly preferred.

Familiarity and Leadership: Candidates should either possess prior head of school experience or have a deep, pre-existing knowledge of the Putney community and its systems to effectively serve as a bridge to the next Head of School.

People-Centric Leadership: The Putney community seeks evidence of characteristics typically found in successful school leaders: being present, approachable, and responsive; demonstrating courage with kindness, character above reproach, and excellent verbal and written communication skills; being a relationship builder, a data-driven decision-maker, and a lifelong learner; modeling humility, a sense of humor, strong listening skills, and the ability to work collaboratively through conflict and consensus-building and to engage meaningfully with students.

Cultural Competence / DEIB: With its commitment to DEIB, the school needs a leader who can draw constituents into meaningful dialogue related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging—even when it is hard. Cultural competence in a diverse and multicultural community such as Putney's is key.

Visibility: Putney is looking for a visible and charismatic leader who makes themselves accessible to others and comes excited to engage fully in the school community. A leader is sought whose work reflects interest in and commitment to the students and their experience at this incredible school.

Knowledge of Strong Head-Board Partnerships: Putney seeks a confident, self-aware, and decisive leader who will move ahead courageously and in strong partnership with the Board to set the future course of The Putney School as it prepares the way for a new long-term head of school.

Capacity to Create and Communicate Vision: Having recently completed the last strategic plan and comprehensive campaign, the Board seeks a strong, collaborative partner as it completes the current strategic planning process; one who can communicate a shared clear and aspirational vision.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- BA/BS in education or related field
- Five years of teaching experience
- Proficiency in MS Office Suite, Google Suite, and web based applications
- Ability to support the progressive educational mission of the School

Salary Range: $250,000 - 300,000, commensurate with experience.







TO APPLY:

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials in a **single merged document, in the order listed**:

- EC Candidate Summary Sheet (Contact Sally Mixsell, below, for this document)
- Letter of Interest, addressed to the The Putney School Search Committee
- Current résumé
- Five references with contact information (including phone numbers and email addresses)
- EC Disclosure Form (Contact Sally Mixsell, below, for this document)

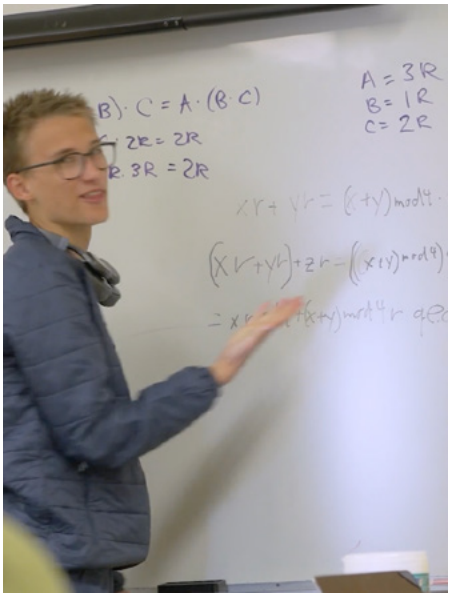
Please address inquiries to:

Sally Mixsell, Partner, Educators Collaborative
smixsell@educatorscollaborative.com









A co-educational 9-12 private boarding and day school.

The Putney School

418 Houghton Brook Road
Putney, Vermont 05346

www.putneyschool.org