



# Westmark School

## ASSOCIATE HEAD OF SCHOOL

**LOCATION**

Encino, CA

**PRIORITY DEADLINE**

April 8

**SALARY**

\$170,000 - \$185,000

**POST DATE**

March 8

**FINAL ROUND**

Late April

**START DATE**

July 1, 2023 OR July 1, 2024

*Additional information about the start date: Westmark School is pleased to consider candidates who can start on July 1, 2023 OR July 1, 2024. Because the role of associate head of school (AHoS) comes at an inflection point for the school, the priority is to find a candidate who aligns best with the mission, vision, and culture of Westmark. If the AHoS is able to start this year, the school will prepare to onboard a new leader. If the AHoS is unable to leave their current position until July 2024, the school will await the right partnership and adapt its schedule accordingly.*

# Summary

Westmark School is a creative and supportive college preparatory school dedicated to educating, empowering, and celebrating students with distinct learning styles, providing the tools necessary to achieve successful and fulfilling futures. Over the past forty years, the school has earned acclaim for transforming the lives of Grades 2–12 students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and other diagnosed language-based learning differences (LBLD). Situated in Encino, California, about ten miles north of UCLA, it currently serves approximately 250 students. A new facility for its Lower School, scheduled to open in fall 2023, will make it possible to expand enrollment in Grades 2–5 and deepen the school's commitment to early intervention.

The associate head of school will oversee broad segments of the academic program during this exciting time in Westmark's history. Building upon the potential of the new Lower School, Westmark will be embarking on an extended period of pivotal growth that will evolve the school into an organization that supports research-to-practice and teacher training—all in service of elevating how students with LBLD are educated, at Westmark and beyond. To that end, the head of school has been laying the foundation for groundbreaking external partnerships with universities, K-12 school districts, research institutes, and organizations across the country.

As these complex endeavors require more of the head of school's attention, Westmark is now in need of an associate head of school to run day-to-day academic operations. The position requires a deep interest and willingness to learn and embrace current and emerging research-based approaches to developing teachers, supporting administrators, and engaging with families. The associate head of school's first year will encompass extensive mentorship and carefully planned leadership handoffs from Westmark's head of school, Claudia Koochek, a recognized leader in the field of educating students with LBLD.



## MISSION

Westmark School is a creative and supportive college preparatory school dedicated to educating, empowering, and celebrating students with distinct learning styles, providing the tools necessary to achieve successful and fulfilling futures.





## HISTORY

Throughout its incarnations over nearly forty years, the mission and educational philosophy of Westmark School has remained the same: to empower students with language-based learning differences (LBLD) to successfully pursue their dreams.

In 1983, Landmark School of Massachusetts opened Landmark West in Culver City as a West Coast extension of their school. The Landmark Foundation purchased the Encino campus in 1994. In the fall of 1997, Landmark School was purchased by a nonprofit corporation, Learning with a Difference, Inc., to provide local control over the development and implementation of the program. These leaders renamed the school Westmark School.

In 2002, Westmark began its expansion, and over the next decade, added a Science, Technology and Media Building, a new classroom wing, an upgraded sports court, and a new Fine Arts building.

Westmark continued to transform itself with changes to its mission statement, curriculum, and administration. In March of 2005, the decision was made to become a fully independent school. This decision supported Westmark's goal of implementing more individualized programming to best serve its students.

Westmark also added a Student Life program to enhance the activities related to student life for the whole school, and integrated both service and experiential learning programs into the curriculum.

In 2013, Westmark School was granted a six-year accreditation term from the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS).





## DEIB at Westmark

Westmark students learn differently and Westmark teachers teach differently. As a result, all students have equal access to curriculum and programming.

Students, faculty, staff, and families bring more than learning differences to Westmark. The Westmark community is diverse economically, racially, ethnically, religiously, and in sexual orientation and gender identity. The school's commitment is to embrace individual identity and ensure that everyone in the community feels welcome and has equal access to the best Westmark has to offer.

Westmark's DEIB leadership team works closely with teachers, advisors, administrators, curriculum team members, and school counselors to integrate multicultural practices into the classrooms and overall school culture. Westmark's work with students, teachers, and leadership positively impacts the community, promoting awareness of identity, equity, and inclusion across grade levels and throughout the community.

Central to preparing students for their futures is teaching them how to become responsible members of society. To succeed in this endeavor, students need to understand their own identities and the identities of others. Westmark embeds diversity work into the culture of the school so students can develop a strong self-concept by understanding and analyzing their own culture while learning to interact and relate with respect to other individuals, students, and cultural groups.



# Key Statistics

## FOUNDING YEAR

**1983**

## GRADES

**2-12**

## ENROLLMENT

**253**

students

**80+**

ZIP codes represented in the student body

## AVERAGE CLASS SIZE

Lower School: **4-8**

Middle / Upper School:

**5-12**



## ATHLETICS

**17** Sports Teams

**57%** of students participate in athletics

**21** Clubs

## ACCREDITING BODIES

CAIS, WASC

## ELECTIVES

Lower School: **11**      Middle School: **15**      Upper School: **14**

## MATRICULATION TO 2-4 YEAR COLLEGES

**97%**

## TUITION ASSISTANCE

**26%** of families receive tuition assistance each year

## TRANSPORTATION

**5** bus/transportation routes throughout Los Angeles

**100%** of students who choose to apply to 4-year colleges have been accepted

[www.westmarkschool.org](http://www.westmarkschool.org)



# The Westmark Difference

Today, Westmark School is a nationally recognized leader in language-based learning differences (LBD) education. In recent years—under the leadership of its visionary head of school, Claudia Koochek—Westmark has distinguished itself especially for its deep commitment to bridging research to practice and pursuing the best academic and social-emotional outcomes for every student.

This commitment to offering an evidence-based curriculum and continually innovating upon its methodologies has established Westmark as a model for educating children with LBD. This is made possible in large part by its investment in professional development and its partnerships with renowned experts at leading institutions. Throughout the year, faculty and staff benefit from ongoing training based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and the RULER approach (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence), which translates directly into student achievement and well-being.



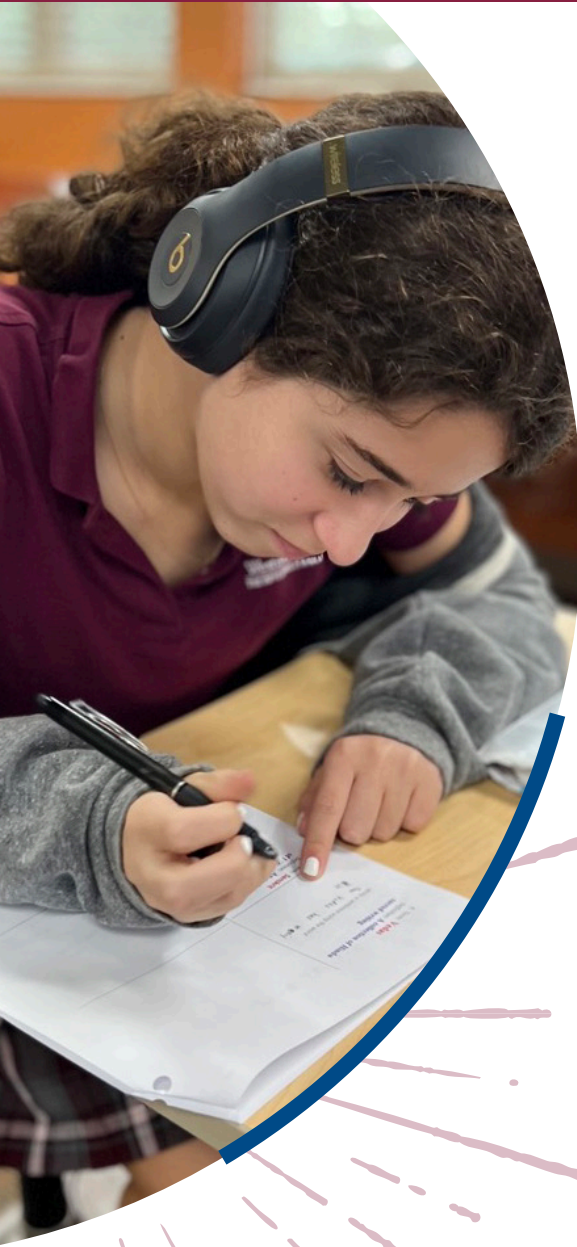
## TEACHING STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES

Explicit strategies and methodologies are used in Lower, Middle, and Upper School classrooms that enable students to effectively access the curriculum and find their strengths. These same explicit strategies and methodologies engage students so they enjoy coming to school each day.

Using the kinesthetic classroom model, students are often not in their seats, but walking, standing and moving during instruction time. Class sizes are small and instruction is individualized so each student is taught according to their personal learning profile. Westmark uses a multisensory approach, meaning teachers and students use multiple modalities as they teach and learn. Westmark teachers are trained to support students' executive functioning skills to help them stay focused and organized.

Throughout the curriculum, teachers scaffold instruction and support for students so that they can increase their independence in academic and executive functioning skills.





# Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

Westmark School students exhibit self-confidence/self-esteem, and exemplify literacy as they become...

## **SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATORS WHO...**

- Use oral, written, and creative forms of expression to communicate information, ideas, and emotions
- Utilize technology to enhance communication
- Receive and interpret the communication of others in an effective manner

## **SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS WHO...**

- Demonstrate responsibility for self and others
- Assess needs and learning styles while applying appropriate strategies to set and achieve goals
- Reflect on experiences and apply the knowledge gained to plan for the future
- Accept responsibility for their own behavior and actions
- Demonstrate ability to complete assignments and projects independently

## **RESPONSIBLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY WHO...**

- Contribute time, energies, and talents to improve the quality of life in the school, community, nation, and world
- Promote mutual respect, appreciation, and acceptance among people of different backgrounds, cultures, and abilities

## **CRITICAL THINKING / PROBLEM SOLVERS WHO...**

- Use technology effectively
- Design, implement, and evaluate appropriate strategies to solve a wide variety of problems
- Use evaluation, synthesis, and analysis to establish and apply criteria to support judgment
- Apply complex problem-solving processing and critical thinking to real-life scenarios while cooperating and collaborating with others



# Three Innovative Programs

Westmark School transforms the lives of students at every age and every grade level. Westmark sparks the imaginations of its youngest learners, ignites passions in its middle school students, and illuminates the future for its high schoolers. Since Westmark's students learn differently, Westmark teaches differently. And the difference is brilliant. Below are three examples of exemplary partnerships and programs that benefit Westmark's amazing and unique learners.



## RULER FROM YALE UNIVERSITY

As a RULER school, Westmark implements an evidence-based SEL/DEI approach to social and emotional learning from Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence. Implementing RULER at Westmark strengthens community, improves educational outcomes, and fosters an equitable, meaningful school culture and environment. The RULER approach helps Westmark leaders, teachers, students, and families practice the skills to create and sustain a positive emotional climate within the school community.

RULER teaches 5 key emotional intelligence skills:

- R** Recognizing emotion in oneself and others
- U** Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions
- L** Labeling emotion with a nuanced vocabulary
- E** Expressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context
- R** Regulating emotions with helpful strategies

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

Westmark also integrates these RULER skills into its Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach through the Harvard School of Education. UDL is a multipronged approach to whole-child, student-centered education and a means to provide opportunities for deep learning through the design of highly flexible methods, materials, and assessments. The goal is expert learning, which provides flexible options for Westmark's students. UDL teaches three principles:

**ENGAGEMENT:** The "Why" of Learning

**REPRESENTATION:** The "What" of Learning

**ACTION AND EXPRESSION:** The "How" of Learning

## WESTLAB

Westmark Learning About Business (WestLAB) is a key component of the Upper School experience that inspires students to learn outside the classroom and prepare for life after Westmark. The program empowers Westmark's neurodiverse learners by teaching them to leverage their strengths as they gain a sense of project ownership and practical business and life skills.

Through Industry Chats and WestLAB Symposiums, students gain a sense of optimism about the future as they link their academic studies to practical experience. WestLAB teaches students to conduct research, write a paper, create a proposal, and deliver a presentation. Students have an opportunity to work with a local organization on a project of interest. The WestLAB experience concludes at the end of their senior year, when students share their achievements with their parents, mentors, teachers, and peers at the annual WestLAB fair.





# A Bold Vision for the Future

## CLAUDIA KOOCHKEK, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Claudia Koochek is an innovative and admired head of school. Her passion for social justice has led her to the creation of a strategic vision that aims to expand educational access to students with learning differences across the country.

Claudia has bold ideas for positioning Westmark as a private school with a public purpose. Over the course of the last several years, Westmark has become a national leader in utilizing neurodiversity research to tailor its educational programs to each individual student's needs. The school invests significant resources every year in faculty and staff professional development to help them understand at a neuropsychological and neurobiological level who they teach and how best to teach. Westmark's 253 students benefit from this investment in training each day, but Claudia's vision goes beyond the school.

## RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Westmark is partnering with universities across the country to stay on the cutting edge of neurodiversity research. The school recently formed a partnership with the UC San Francisco Dyslexia Center, whose mission is to eliminate the debilitating effects of developmental dyslexia while preserving and even enhancing the relative strengths of each individual. Furthermore, it aims to develop best practice protocols to implement individually catered interventions in classrooms throughout the country.

In addition, Westmark has partnered with the USC Mark and Mary Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute. The Institute applies innovative imaging and information technologies to the study of the brain. Its interdisciplinary team investigates brain structure, function, and disease, using techniques such as mathematics, genomic analysis, and ultra-high-field MRI scanning.

Each of these partnerships positions Westmark to continue making groundbreaking strides in the area of neurodiversity research, and remain a leader in changing the lives of its students and beyond.

Claudia's goal is to create an institute for research and training that will enable Westmark to use its knowledge and insights to impact the lives of more children and become a vital resource for the community. The institute will focus on early intervention through screening and assessment tools, reducing the stigma surrounding dyslexia and other learning differences, and providing training for Westmark's public school colleagues on best practices in teaching students with learning differences. This vision is fueled by Westmark's lower school campus project, and its external partnerships with universities, K-12 school districts, research institutes, and organizations across the country.





## The Vision in Action

In the summer of 2022, Westmark School broke ground on a new and expanded Lower School campus. The promise of this long-planned project is bold: to create an optimal learning environment that matches the excellence of its academic programs for young learners with language-based learning differences (LBDL).

The Lower School Campus Project is the springboard for Westmark to extend its reach and grow its impact. Representing a major investment in early intervention, the new facility will enable the school to increase Grades 2–5 enrollment while maintaining small class sizes and low student-teacher ratios. Coupled with Westmark’s plan to increase tuition assistance, the school will be able to welcome many more neurodiverse learners from across the Greater Los Angeles area so that they can access Westmark’s highly specialized, research-based curriculum and thrive in the innovative, inclusive environment.

### ABOUT THE DESIGN

To help Westmark achieve its vision for the Lower School Campus Project, the school engaged world-class architectural firm NBBJ and industry-leading builders Suffolk. Every square foot of the two-story structure has been designed with the student top of mind. Highlights of the inventive design include:

- Ten classrooms reflecting the ecology best suited for a variety of distinct learning styles and differentiated instruction
- Outdoor areas that promote a connection to nature
- A black box theater to encourage creative expression and build self-confidence
- A dedicated occupational and speech therapy room
- State-of-the-art technology to support teaching and learning
- LEED® certification



# Additional Insights

As described earlier in this document, Westmark has developed a bold vision for its future. The school aspires to programmatic and campus growth. The school is laying the groundwork for research-to-practice partnerships that will benefit Westmark's incredible population of students who learn differently. But perhaps the greatest long-term and industry-wide impact for Westmark would be to develop programs that benefit students from other schools, vis-a-vis teacher trainings, institutes, and public-private partnerships.

These goals and plans are thanks in large part to Westmark's innovative, dedicated, and respected head of school. The school community has rallied behind Claudia's vision. But as she helps take Westmark into new frontiers, she needs a trusted partner to whom she can eventually hand over day-to-day academic oversight. The head of school has engineered an intentional and gradual leadership transition plan, which will allow the associate head of school to learn her current approach to developing staff, engaging parents, supporting students, and empowering senior administrators. Following a period of observation and mentorship, the associate head of school will be entrusted with significant areas of oversight and direct supervision.

The associate head of school will be an important hire. This new senior administrator will enable the head of school to dedicate more time to external-facing initiatives essential to Westmark's long-term growth. Therefore, the school has developed a thoughtful hiring strategy. Westmark is open to hiring a candidate who can start on July 1, 2023. However, with only a few months left in the current school year, Westmark is aware that outstanding leaders may not be available by that date. The school is willing to take time to find the right leader and consider applicants who cannot start until July 1, 2024.



*"Social justice is part of my DNA. Only a small percentage of children in the United States with learning differences are able to attend a school like Westmark. I have thought long and hard about the children with learning differences who do not have access to a Westmark education and the enormous needs of our public school system. Lack of equal access to effective, evidence-based educational methods is a social injustice. I feel a strong sense of obligation to find ways that Westmark can make a difference in children's lives beyond our campus."*

**- CLAUDIA KOOCHEK, HEAD OF SCHOOL**

We invite you to watch our [INTERVIEW](#) with Claudia, who discusses the importance of finding a highly skilled and mission-aligned associate head of school to join the community at Westmark.



# Could This Opportunity be Right for You?

## WHAT WESTMARK SEEKS MOST

- Expertise overseeing core academic and co-curricular programs
- An ability to lead day-to-day operations at a multidivisional school
- A drive to change the lives of students with language-based learning differences (LBLD)
- A devoted work ethic with a relational approach to solving tough problems
- An eagerness to shadow, learn, and embrace the head of school's nuanced and situationally aligned approach to school leadership
- A readiness to take on additional areas of responsibility over time, and to gracefully explore new systems and improvements to academic operations
- A desire to be a part of organizational transformation, as Westmark aims to expand its outreach and commitment to serving public students with LBLD

## INITIAL AREAS OF OVERSIGHT

- Expand and enhance the academic program of the future
- Promote a culture of academic excellence and innovation
- Evaluate the student learning experience and academic outcomes
- Serve as an institutional leader and trusted partner to the head of school

## ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE THE ASSOCIATE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Relational	Curious
Innovative	Creative
Thoughtful	Analytical
Inquisitive	Collaborative
Open-Minded	Hardworking



# Duties

- Oversee the day-to-day operations of the academic program.
- Observe and shadow the head of school to learn her approach to school leadership, and stay in coordination and communication with her regarding delicate, sensitive, and important matters.
- Provide counsel and guidance to families, faculty, and staff on matters of curriculum, pedagogy, and student success.
- Foster a culture of faculty growth and oversee the annual process of teacher goal setting and evaluation.
- Promote a culture of academic excellence and innovation by serving as a visible presence and inspiring spokesperson among faculty and families.
- Stay on top of current trends, research, and emerging ideas in the domain of educating students with language-based learning differences (LBDL) in order to foster continued growth and improvement to the academic program.
- Lead evaluations—both quantitative and qualitative—of the academic program to measure the impact and efficacy of student learning.
- Establish and maintain thoughtful curricular and programmatic partnerships both regionally and nationally.

# Qualities/Qualifications

- Possession of a bachelor's degree in education or in a relevant field from an accredited college or university; graduate degree highly preferred
- Successful track record leading academic initiatives and programs
- Experience as a school administrator guiding, coaching, leading, and supervising faculty
- Immersion in diversity work—both in training and in implementation—and a commitment to fostering culturally competent and inclusive classrooms
- Ability to architect and implement organizational systems, educational models, and operational protocols in support of all aspects of the academic program
- Excellent communication and presentation skills—both written and oral
- A love of elementary, middle, and high school education for students with LBDL, and a readiness to support all learning journeys of a diverse student body and faculty
- Prior teaching in a K-12 school



# How to Apply

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of Westmark School to identify exceptional academic leaders to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Direct inquiries to:

[jobs@12MRecruiting.com](mailto:jobs@12MRecruiting.com)



## APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY APRIL 8, 2023 WILL RECEIVE PRIORITY REVIEW.

All applications must be submitted online: [www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/Westmark](http://www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/Westmark)

An application requires submitting four PDFs:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to the Westmark School search committee
- CV or resume
- 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)
- A response to the following prompt:

*What makes you excited to serve students with language-based learning differences, and what feels slightly daunting about this opportunity?*

Westmark School is an equal opportunity employer and makes employment decisions on the basis of merit and job performance. School policy prohibits discrimination based on race, color, creed, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, age, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical conditions (including genetic characteristics or information), sexual orientation, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, and local laws.

