

# The Agnes Irwin School

**Assistant Head of School for  
Academics and Inclusive Excellence**



**The Agnes Irwin School (AIS)**, a premier educational community for girls in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12, seeks a dynamic, innovative leader to serve as Assistant Head of School for Academics and Inclusive Excellence. Reporting to and partnering with the Head of School, the Assistant Head will lead efforts prioritized in a community-developed strategic plan: igniting curiosity and creativity within AIS students, energizing and empowering faculty, and enriching the AIS community by demonstrating a commitment to inclusive excellence.

Since the school's founding in 1869, AIS has dedicated itself to providing an exceptional and empowering education for girls. Rooted in academic excellence, scholarship, community, and collaboration, AIS consistently tailors its programs to the distinctive and individual needs of girls, always holding fast to the principle that a girl's educational journey from childhood through graduation should be joyful, challenging, creative, and inspirational. Located on a beautiful campus in Philadelphia's Main Line suburbs, AIS students and faculty benefit from access to the comprehensive cultural, educational, environmental, and industry resources that the Philadelphia area provides.

**The Agnes  
Irwin  
School  
empowers  
girls to  
learn, to  
lead, and  
to live a  
legacy.**



## TO LEARN

Agnes Irwin provides girls with a deep foundation in the humanities, mathematics, sciences, wellness, and athletics. In an inclusive setting that values diversity, students develop skills in critical and analytical thinking, self-expression, effective communication, and collaboration. A rich and varied approach to instruction, team and individual endeavors, inquiry, and assessment enables girls to solve problems, design solutions, create meaning, and prepare for a complex and challenging world.

## TO LEAD

We believe that all girls and young women have the capacity to lead, and that leadership can take many forms. Therefore, through our instruction, our community interactions, and our daily choices, we affirm this belief and provide an environment that challenges girls to develop the core values of leadership: empathy, integrity, resilience, independent thinking, and commitment to action.

## TO LIVE A LEGACY

Agnes Irwin students are a part of the global community of girls and women. They are also the trustees of our School's heritage and traditions. By adopting values that foster equity, justice, social responsibility, civic-mindedness, and integrity, and by nurturing positive relationships and intentional decision making, our students and alumnae engage in bold and meaningful ways to impact our interconnected world.

## ABOUT THE SCHOOL

AIS is an independent, college preparatory day school for nearly 600 girls in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. AIS offers a unique opportunity for its students: nurturing leaders with a tenacious spirit and sense of integrity while prioritizing civic engagement and independent thinking through a rigorous liberal arts curriculum within a collaborative

environment. Young women gain maturity and self-confidence as they are challenged to become the global leaders of tomorrow.

Situated just 12 miles outside of Philadelphia in Rosemont, PA, AIS sits on a beautiful 24-acre campus equipped with extensive classroom facilities as well as spaces dedicated to the arts, science, technology, engineering, and athletics as well as campus maker spaces. Along with three divisions—Lower, Middle, and Upper—AIS uniquely includes the Center for the Advancement of Girls (the Center), which is devoted to creating research-based programming and partnerships to ensure the School continues to be at the forefront of what is best for girls.

AIS's 159 faculty and staff members personify the school's commitment to academic excellence and model a community with a diversity of experience and perspective. The teachers—84 percent of whom hold an advanced degree—cherish and reward determination, creativity, and independent thinking in an academically rigorous and supportive environment. The student-to-faculty ratio is 6:1 which allows for an understanding of individual student interest, personal development, and skill enhancement.



## ACADEMICS AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

The AIS student experience is rooted in research about what is best for girls: how they learn, how their brains develop, and what their social and emotional needs are as they grow and develop. AIS girls are known, understood, supported, and encouraged to be their very best selves. Throughout the journey, they are guided by exceptional teachers—the kind who have a gift for bringing out the best in each girl. Students are surrounded by teachers who become lifelong mentors.

### Lower School (PreK-4)

The focus in [Lower School](#) is educating young girls based on research about their development and growth. There is no one right way to learn—and the AIS curriculum is designed to address the individual academic learning style of each student. The AIS faculty encourage girls to notice what is around them and to discover the connections that exist in the world.



The intentional structure of the early childhood education program utilizes a combination of academic instruction and guided play to challenge students to think critically, make connections,

take risks, and solve problems. Across the division, a program of core subjects (language arts, math, science, social studies, and Spanish) are supported by learning opportunities in art, physical education, music, and library classes. Students have opportunities to use laptops,

K'NEX, iPads, cameras, and other tools to develop a sense of wonder and technological knowledge. Whether students are creating portraits, writing how-to-books, building a massive clock tower, or coding during “Genius Hour” in the iWonder Lab, learning is happening.

At AIS, it’s essential that girls learn to see themselves as the bold leaders of tomorrow. Throughout the Lower School years, students develop their leadership identities as they reflect on the traits of strong leadership and begin to recognize those traits in themselves and their peers. Produced by a team of AIS faculty, the Center for the Advancement of Girls, and Bryn Mawr College researchers, the Living Leadership in the Lower School program (L3) brings abstract ideas and concrete examples of leadership to life. By the time she leaves Lower School, every girl sees herself as a leader: empowered to ask questions and find answers, self-advocate, and collaborate. The development of students as leaders furthers AIS’s commitment to fostering confident learners who are compelling public speakers, a goal that continues in the later school years.

AIS places emphasis on promoting an inclusive environment in the Lower School and beyond. For example, using research about the social development of young girls, the Let’s Care program utilizes the Four “C’s” of social intelligence—communication, caring, coping, and character—to equip students with core competencies of friendship-making, self-expression, and self-care. As students enter the older elementary years, the focus of the program shifts to teaching students how to recognize relational aggression, and how to use strategies for dealing with this phenomenon effectively. Wellness classes center on building positive body image and self-esteem. At every grade level in the Lower School, attention to the whole child—academic, social, and emotional—is intentional and specific.

## Middle School (5-8)

The [Middle School](#) faculty at AIS offer an engaging and dynamic curriculum to inspire girls during these critical years. The rigorous program includes courses in English, history, mathematics, science, health and wellness, and world language (French, Spanish, and Latin). The scaffolding of the Middle School curriculum follows a series of guiding themes, each designed with an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Faculty work across disciplines to create a meaningful and immersive learning environment. 5th grade students are charged to see the relationship between stories and structures, while 6th graders tackle how settings impact systems—natural or human-made. 7th graders dive deeply into understanding the connections between cultures. 8th graders investigate the meaning of “home” and its impact on the voices of those within the conversation. Students develop their emotional and social intelligence, including understanding and practicing empathy, supporting their Middle School learning and beyond. Guided by the Courage To Be Me curriculum, 5th grade girls participate in activity-based learning programs emphasizing life skills and character education. Courage To Be Me is complemented by Inside Outside in 6th grade and a responsive Wellness curriculum that is offered to all grades, 5-8.

Technology is used as an academic tool and is infused throughout the learning environment, including in the state-of-the-art [STEAM Studio](#), which is located in the Innovation Corridor in the Middle and Upper School’s building. The studio is outfitted with iPads, 3D printers, and other tech tools, providing an immersive space for girls to explore science, mathematics, technology, engineering, and the arts. The 1:1 Program equips each Middle School girl with a laptop, integrating the latest technologies into the classroom while teaching 21st-century communication and online safety skills.

The Middle School advisory system, known as Parliament, offers a space for students and faculty to strengthen community and provides an additional level of mentorship amongst the two constituent groups. Students can look forward to the intentional teaching of the Middle School Values, preparation for campus initiatives, and the validation of their voices during these small group forums. Students meet daily in Parliament to discuss themes related to the Values Statement and participate in Middle School activities such as Assembly. Parliament results in a greater sense of community and pride in oneself. The distinctive combination of a talented middle school faculty, an engaging curriculum, and a deep commitment to knowing and supporting each girl allows AIS girls to grow their confidence.



## Upper School (9-12)

Upper School at AIS provides a stimulating, close-knit, and engaging environment that encourages young women to pursue a vast set of interests, develop talents, and push themselves beyond their conscious and unconscious boundaries within and outside the classroom. A comprehensive and rigorous college preparatory curriculum ensures students gain breadth and depth in their knowledge of the arts and sciences while mastering acute analytical thinking and evaluation skills. Senior Assembly is a signature capstone program where each student has a platform to research, write, and deliver a formal speech on the topic of her choice to the entire Upper School community.

Academic offerings in the Upper School include English, history, mathematics, and science courses along with a variety of modern and classical languages and visual and performing arts. AIS students also have access to a robust program of elective courses.

Opportunities include Computer Science (a mathematics or science elective); Women's Health and Human Rights (a history elective); Engineering for the Future, and Film as History (an art or history elective).

In addition to the academic flexibility and electives offered, the Special Studies Program gives Upper Schoolers access to immersive learning opportunities, both on- and off-campus. For example, girls have the chance to travel internationally to fully engage with language and culture, travel to the south to study the Civil

Rights Movement, or pitch a new product idea, Shark Tank-style, to professors from the Villanova School of Business. The Special Studies Program allows girls to complete 20+ hours of community service towards a graduation requirement of at least 40 hours. Girls are challenged to develop the habit of serving the broader community along with gaining awareness of the unique lived experiences and challenges of others nationally and globally.

While academic preparation for college begins the day each girl takes her first class, deep understanding of the college matriculation process starts in 9th grade and intensifies in the junior and senior years.

AIS's detailed and supportive college counseling process and the academic rigor of its programs have proven to yield impressive results:

- The 2018 graduating class received 342 offers of admissions from 146 distinct institutions of higher education, including Ivy League Universities, Highly Selective Liberal Arts Colleges, Top Public Universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and International Institutions;
- 92% of the Class of 2018 are attending one of their top college choices;
- 70% of these students are attending the most/highly selective colleges;
- 30% of these girls intend to major in a STEM field; and,
- 22% were recruited athletes

## LIFE AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

AIS community life is as unique as it is vibrant. With nearly 150 years of tradition to bond them together, AIS students undoubtedly find an intellectual and social home the minute they step foot on campus in a community that takes an all-in approach to empowering each girl. With diversity and inclusion in mind, AIS students have a variety of activities to appeal to each girls' distinct skills and interests.



Beginning in the Lower School, AIS teachers pride themselves on making school a joyful and engaging experience. As early as Pre-Kindergarten, Lower School girls can participate in the after-session and/or Extra Session program, providing after-school care for families and an opportunity for all students to explore new interests. Students choose to participate in mind enriching activities including Cooking Around the World, Wood Creations, Green Thumb Club, World Travelers, Acting, and Coding. Other cherished programs in the Lower School include Girls on the Run, Field day, Grandfriends' day, and Mayfair—an AIS spring tradition that is more than 75 years old.

Expanded opportunities make the transition to Middle School an exciting one. Every year, each grade participates in an overnight field trip. These trips provide an opportunity to extend learning and offer a whole class bonding experience. Middle School workshops, Parliament, and student council are various ways for students to discover and nurture their leadership skills in the way that best suits them. Beginning in the 6th grade, students can join one of the ten Middle School sports teams. Similar to the Lower School, there are particular programs exclusively for Middle School; these include Stars and Stripes day and the Middle School Musical.

Life in the Upper School is just as busy as years prior. Each year, students can look forward to a different experience: 9th grade students attending an off-campus retreat; sophomores receiving their class rings; juniors accepting their AIS blazers signifying their transitioning role to a leader of the campus; and the welcoming of Seniors into the alumnae association with a special dinner 100 days before commencement.

Students continue to shape a sense of community by participating in hallway competitions and upper-level advisory groups. Girls can choose to participate in one of the [14 varsity sports teams](#). Since leadership and community are core values

of AIS, Upper School students have a “Club” time built into their schedule. Upper Schoolers can choose from more than [50 student-led clubs](#), boards, and organizations. Girls can pursue everything from student government to robotics (for many, an activity began in Lower School), multicultural councils, cultural organizations, the student newspaper, STEM club, pottery and theater improvisation workshops.



## INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

AIS fosters an inclusive, diverse, and equitable community by honoring the individuality of all students, families, teachers, and staff. Diversity of experience, thought, and ideas is not only a pillar of the school, but is an integral part of the learning process and the AIS experience. Aspects of individuality are explored through inspiring speakers, a rigorous curriculum, faculty development, and student organizations. Every day, AIS nurtures the necessary skills and provides experiences for students to thrive in a diverse and inclusive community.

Equity and inclusion is a collaborative effort at AIS. Four coordinators—one for each academic division and one for staff—work together with Division Directors and the Assistant Head of School to implement programming, resolve conflicts, and model and support inclusive excellence.

AIS encourages equity and inclusion through a number of channels including:

- *SEED Project* – AIS faculty have participated in the [National SEED Project](#), a peer-led professional development program that builds capacity for a more equitable curriculum, campus, workplace, and community. The School has developed a special SEED Program for AIS parents.
- *Unity Board* – Student participants celebrate, embrace, and raise awareness on the importance of diversity and inclusion to the AIS community and the world.
- *Friday Forums* – Each Friday, Upper School students gather during their lunch period to respectfully discuss challenging topics like the political divide, sexual harassment, mental health, and race relations. This program is recognized by the Harvard Graduate School of Education Making Caring Common project.
- *Community in Action Day* - A full day of workshops and activities designed to encourage learning and help U.S. students, faculty, staff, and parents deepen their awareness and appreciation of the varied backgrounds and experiences of the School community by exploring different viewpoints

and actively engaging in conversations that foster cross-cultural understanding.

- *Let's Care Program* – A yearlong program in which issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded into this distinctive curriculum that supports the social and emotional growth of Lower School students.
- *Inspiring Speakers* – AIS invites speakers to campus to speak on equity and inclusion topics, including Pakistani-born internationally ranked squash player Maria Toorpakai-Wazir, who dressed as a boy in order to play sports, and Dr. Howard Stevenson, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who spoke to faculty, staff, and parents about promoting racial literacy.
- *Committee on Equity and Inclusion* – This standing committee of the Board of Trustees supports the School's rich, multi-faceted and ever-changing diversity in all of its constituencies, and evaluates and promotes policies and procedures that advance the principles of equity and inclusion at AIS.

## CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GIRLS

Only at AIS will you find the [Center for the Advancement of Girls](#): a vital force that infuses girl-centered research into the AIS experience. The Center impacts curriculum and drives the school forward by creating programs and partnerships to enable girls to enrich their AIS experiences, hone their leadership skills, and develop their voice.

The Center forges partnerships with colleges, universities, and nonprofits to expand the AIS curricula and extend students' educational experiences, allowing AIS students to apply what they learn in the classroom in innovative ways. Along with Living Leadership in Lower School, current Center programs include:



### *Real Girls. Real Voices. Real Impact.*

Throughout the year as part of Parliament, the Center presents a series of workshops for 5th and 6th grade girls, focused on leadership development and identity. These fun and interactive events are attuned to the young middle school girl and build upon the work started in Lower School.



### *AIS Allied*

This yearlong cohort-style mentoring program provides a safe space for girls in grades 9-12 to discuss school life, identity, career exploration, societal issues and pressures with “allies,” who are adult women mentors. Allies share their lived experiences and help guide students through conversation and activities.

### *Student-Athlete Leadership Training Seminar*

The Center for the Advancement of Girls and the Athletic Department collaborated to create a series of seminars tailored to strengthen the leadership potential of Upper School student-athletes.

The Center for the Advancement of Girls impacts the experience of all AIS students, informing pedagogy and curriculum in the classroom. Spearheading academic department retreats, creating seminar-style courses with university partners for Upper School students, harnessing the Special Studies Program to create experiential learning opportunities for girls in all grades –all are examples demonstrating how the Center is creating a relevant and deeply engaging learning experience for AIS students.

The Center’s staff is currently made up of the:

- Director of Strategic Partnerships and Research
- Program Manager
- Director of Service Learning and Special Programs
- Events and Special Projects Coordinator

## **INNOVATION AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL**

At AIS, you’ll find kindergarteners coding robots, 5th graders building 3D models of the Nile River, 8th graders designing video games to explain the principles of Reaganomics, and upper schoolers using design-thinking principles to construct product prototypes. AIS girls are encouraged to create, explore, innovate, and collaborate while thinking about problems from new angles.

The three members of the Innovation Team—or iTeam for short—are the “Innovation Experts” at AIS. They serve as catalysts and coaches for teachers and partner with them to bring innovative practices into the classroom to create meaningful learning experiences for students. Collaborating with teachers to create new projects, or to revamp existing projects, the iTeam offers brainstorming help and provides resources to transform ideas into reality. Throughout the year, the iTeam organizes and leads professional development opportunities for teachers to learn about new technology tools, project ideas, and teaching approaches. In addition to facilitating workshops for several in-service days, the team also regularly hosts informal “pop-up PD” sessions during teacher lunch hours and other free periods.

In 2017, thanks to a grant from the Edward E. Ford Foundation, AIS launched the *Legacy Through Leadership* program: a three-year fellowship designed to empower faculty members to explore, create, and collaborate on powerful new learning opportunities for students. In workshops and individually, the “Innovation Fellows” delve into pedagogical theory, develop professional goals, and explore new technologies, while being mentored by the iTeam. After the first year, the Fellows serve as instructional coaches to a new cohort of teachers.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2016, AIS's Board of Trustees—along with the administrative leadership team, faculty, staff, parent, alumnae and student input—strategically crafted a course to propel the school further forward. Building on the success of a \$40 million capital campaign completed in 2014, AIS has prepared to embrace the opportunities and challenges ahead by focusing on four key initiatives as part of a [strategic plan](#):

- Ignite curiosity and creativity
- Energize our educators
- Enrich our community
- Secure our financial future

These strategic priorities mark the course through 2021, including a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the school's founding in 2019-2020, as AIS continues to empower girls by delivering a transformative education.

## LEADERSHIP AT THE AGNES IRWIN SCHOOL

Head of School [Wendy L. Hill, Ph.D.](#)

Dr. Hill has been a strong, collaborative leader who has helped to advance AIS since becoming the 13th Head of School in July 2014. After leading the School through a successful PAIS re-accreditation in her first year, Dr. Hill guided a comprehensive process to develop the School's Strategic Plan which was informed by significant input from the AIS community and the latest research in girls' education. To implement these exciting and ambitious

goals, Dr. Hill has assembled a strong group of administrators who are focused on enhancing the learning environment for the current and future generations of AIS girls.

Working with the Board and others, Dr. Hill has finalized a campus master plan for the School that articulates a comprehensive framework for future work on facilities and grounds, one which will continue to ensure that AIS provides a state-of-the-art campus in keeping with the premier education offered.

An engaged leader, you can typically find Dr. Hill at a sporting event, a play performance, a robotics competition, or doing morning carline in the Lower School. Moreover, because Dr. Hill is committed to knowing students in authentic ways, she also teaches science in each division, has had an advisory of 9th grade students, and offers a Special Studies Program course for U.S. students.

Prior to joining the AIS community, Dr. Hill had a highly successful career at Lafayette College, where she served as Provost and Dean of the Faculty for seven years. Before moving into administration, Dr. Hill held the William C. '67 and Pamela H. Rappolt chair in neuroscience and taught at all levels of the curriculum at Lafayette while mentoring more than 100 students conducting research in her laboratory. Dr. Hill was named the Pennsylvania Professor of the Year by the CASE Foundation and received numerous awards for her teaching and scholarly achievements. The Lafayette College Neuroscience Laboratory was named in her honor.



## ROLE OF THE ASSISTANT HEAD FOR ACADEMICS AND INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

The Assistant Head for Academics and Inclusive Excellence will report to the Head of School.

The Assistant Head will accomplish the school's strategic goals with the help of direct reports, including:

Academic Department Chairs

iTeam Members

Center for the Advancement of Girls Staff

Equity and Inclusion Coordinators

Director of Robotics

In addition, the Assistant Head chairs two key committees vital to the mission of the school: 1) The Program Team, which consists of the three Division Directors and works to advance school-wide curricular programming and academic initiatives, and 2) The Teaching and Learning Committee, which develops and supports teaching and learning initiatives at the School; the Teaching and Learning Committee includes Department Chairs, Division Directors, the Innovation Team, and “at large” faculty members from all divisions. The Assistant Head manages the process and budget for professional development of faculty and staff.

### Opportunities and Challenges

The Assistant Head of School for Academics and Inclusive Excellence will help lead AIS forward, informed by the strategic priorities of the school, by supporting curriculum development and co-curricular programming designed to ignite curiosity and creativity; promoting equity and inclusive excellence as guiding principles in the curriculum and campus culture; advancing the professional development programs created by the iTeam; and overseeing the research and programs of the Center for the Advancement of



Girls. The Assistant Head, working collaboratively with the Head of School, will advance the mission of AIS by prioritizing the following:

- Using a research-based approach, assess current academic programs and develop new ones to further enhance the School's rigorous educational offerings and ensure that the School is, given our rapidly changing world and educational landscape, meeting the needs of students and helping them thrive as learners and leaders;
- Energize faculty members, empowering them to explore, create, and collaborate so that they develop their full potential as teachers and role models, and provide outstanding learning opportunities for students;
- Expand cultural competency training and other professional development programs to strengthen inclusive classroom environments and support deep engagement with topics related to real-world problems, diversity of thought and experiences, and global issues;
- Develop and advance initiatives and programs that foster an equitable and inclusive community thereby supporting the social, emotional, and academic experiences of all students while advancing a culture of trust, transparency, and open communication;
- Develop and implement strategies for recruiting and retaining families, faculty, administrators, and staff of diverse backgrounds; and,
- Oversee the cultivation of community-based strategic partnerships that expand programming and educational opportunities for AIS students and faculty.

## Qualifications and Personal Characteristics

Given the opportunities and resources available at AIS, the Assistant Head of School for Academics and Inclusive Excellence will be a dynamic, collaborative, and forward-thinking leader with a passion for educating girls. S/he will have a proven track record developing research-based curriculum and co-curricular programming and demonstrated ability to advance equity and inclusion work within a community. In addition, strong candidates will show the following:

- Outstanding leadership skills including the ability to facilitate, collaborate, coordinate, and lead a project from inception to successful completion;
- An ability to work effectively across divisions and departments, creating robust partnerships and connecting resources;
- A capacity for distributive leadership and strong management practices, including collaboration and delegation;

- Demonstrated ability to develop meaningful relationships with students and to work productively with a broad range of constituents, including faculty, staff, parents, trustees, and alumnae;
- A positive and optimistic attitude and creative approach to problem-solving;
- A desire and ability to build on current innovative programming and scale change throughout the institution;
- Excellent interpersonal and communication (verbal and written) skills;
- Strong work ethic, personal integrity, and ability to handle sensitive information with discretion and tact;
- A joyful approach to learning and a sense of humor.

Prior experience working in independent schools will be viewed favorably. Bachelor's degree is required, graduate degree preferred.





Please send all nominations, inquiries,  
and expressions of interest in confidence to:

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