



The Spence School

Head of Middle School

New York, NY

An Extraordinary Leadership Opportunity for July 2024

APPLICATIONS REQUESTED ASAP AND NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 29, 2023

Founded by Clara B. Spence in 1892, The Spence School is an independent, college-preparatory day school serving a diverse community of girls in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Ranking among the nation's preeminent schools for girls, Spence prepares students for the lifelong transformation of self and the world with purpose, passion, and perspective.

Spence's vibrant canvas of teaching and learning is inspired by the words of Clara Spence, who described learning as an "intellectual and moral adventure." The talented faculty embraces the challenge of preparing Spence's students to thrive as engaged citizens.

The Spence program stretches across three main buildings: 91st Street Campus serving Middle and Upper School students and administrative offices, 93rd Street Campus serving Lower School, and the 412 Athletics and Educational Building, which opened in 2021. In thoughtful and impactful ways, Spence balances developmentally attuned programs and facilities for three divisions with the all-important throughlines of being one school.

A highly selective school, Spence enrolls girls from all boroughs of New York City as well as from parts of Westchester County, Long Island, Connecticut, New York State, and New Jersey. The School actively seeks students who reflect the racial, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic diversity of the wider world. More than \$7.9 million in financial aid provides assistance to nearly 21 percent of the student body.

The Spence School's large and considered educational vista of opportunities for students features rigorous and imaginative academics in all three divisions; a full array of arts offerings; a comprehensive physical education curriculum; a robust interscholastic athletics program; and more than 92 Middle and Upper School student clubs, 4 fellowships, 80 Upper School fellows, academic teams, activities, and organizations. Spence girls are intellectually curious, spirited, deeply engaged, diverse in their interests, creative, and hardworking.

Reporting to Head of School Felicia Wilks, the Head of Middle School is a key academic leader in a dynamic team of senior administrators. Collaborating with a deeply talented and experienced Middle School faculty, the Head of Middle School ensures a rigorous Middle School curriculum, provides moral and ethical leadership, oversees all aspects of the student experience, promotes healthy communications, and serves as a passionate advocate for the Middle School division as well as for the power of a Spence education.

The Spence School at a Glance

Mission

With a commitment to academic excellence and personal integrity, The Spence School prepares a diverse community of girls and young women for the lifelong transformation of self and the world with purpose, passion, and perspective.

Philosophy

Offering a rigorous, liberal arts study, The Spence School develops high standards and character while creating an environment that fosters self-confidence and the joy of learning. Charging our students to meet the demands of academic excellence and responsible citizenship in a changing world, we teach that diverse points of view fuel inquiry, engagement, and deeper understandings of complex truths. We believe in the strength, intellect, and vitality of women.

Enrollment and Financial Aid

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|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 2023-24 TOTAL ENROLLMENT: | 772 |
| LOWER SCHOOL (K-4): | 272 |
| MIDDLE SCHOOL (5-8): | 233 |
| UPPER SCHOOL (9-12): | 267 |
| STUDENTS OF COLOR: | 50% |
| 2023-24 TUITION: | \$63,011 |
| FINANCIAL AID: | \$7,914,747 |
| STUDENTS RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID: | 20.85% |

Faculty

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| TOTAL NUMBER OF FACULTY | 136 |
| STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO | 6:1 |
| AVERAGE FACULTY TENURE AT SPENCE: | 10 years |
| MEDIAN YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE: | 19 years |
| FACULTY/STAFF OF COLOR: | 44% |
| FACULTY WITH ADVANCED DEGREES | 80% |

Location And Campuses

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| LOCATION: | Upper East Side Manhattan |
| LOWER SCHOOL: | 56 East 93rd Street |
| MIDDLE/UPPER SCHOOL: | 22 East 91st Street |
| ATHLETICS AND EDUCATION CENTER: | 412 East 90th Street |

Spence is engaging in its strategic plan development during the 2023-2024 academic year. The current Long-Range Plan can be accessed here: [Long Range Plan \(spenceschool.org\)](https://spenceschool.org/Long-Range-Plan)

Read Spence's commitment to Diversity and Equity here: [Diversity and Equity \(spenceschool.org\)](https://spenceschool.org/Diversity-and-Equity)

Not for school but for life we learn.

The Middle School



The foundation of the Middle School program is built from a deep understanding, shared by teachers, advisors, Grade Deans, and athletic coaches, of the spectacular developmental trajectory of our students and the inherent opportunities for academic and personal growth within an all-girls' environment. In the throes of identity development, Middle School scholars are impelled toward greater independence as they develop a sense of belonging and acceptance and give great consideration to their place in their school community. Student learning in and out of the classroom deepens their self-knowledge as they develop more critical thinking and problem-solving skills, build and reshape relationships, identify interests and talents, become more confident in their leadership skills, and gain greater independence and take on increased responsibility.

Acquiring the Townhouse on 90th Street and connecting it to the School's flagship building on 91st Street, which was completed in 2013, enabled Spence to create more distinct Upper and Middle School identities. Believing in the value of divisionally specialized teaching, in 2021 Spence moved away from Middle and Upper School crossover teaching so that teachers hone pedagogical understandings attuned to developmental age and are fully present in the life of one division.

In the Middle and Upper School, curricular decisions rest primarily within departments and grade-level teams. The departmental structures allow for deep and sustained work on curriculum and pedagogy. "Academic Excellence" is the inspiration for teachers as they pose essential questions, craft lesson plans, design projects and assessments and provide feedback to students.

Academic Program

Across all disciplines the Middle School curriculum emphasizes the development and reinforcement of essential study, research, and discipline-specific habits of mind and skills. These include analysis of primary source material, close reading of literature, expository writing in English and history, experiment design, implementation and data analysis in science classes, the study of increasingly complex grammatical structures in the modern and classical languages, the development of algebraic models and abstract reasoning in mathematics,



technical skill development coupled with personal expression in the visual and performing arts, and the development of team play concepts and skills in physical education.

There is a robust scaffold of academic support for Middle School students who are constantly encouraged to see their learning as a process. They recognize high expectations, are trusted to

tackle increasingly complex tasks, are encouraged to take advantage of resources such as the math and writing labs to seek help, and to keep going as they learn that rigor comes in cycles across material over time.

With intentional design, the curriculum stretches their skills from learning how to share ideas, to understanding how to show up in conversations and respect different values and how to build a more complex, evidence-based interdisciplinary position.

For more on the Middle School Curriculum, visit: [Middle School \(spenceschool.org\)](https://spenceschool.org)



Student Experience

Middle School life is built on relationships with teachers, advisors, and deans, as well as with classmates across grades in highly individual and collaborative ways. In homeroom, advisory, and one-on-one meetings with teachers and advisors, students gain greater self-awareness, begin to think more broadly and deeply about their capacity, and reflect on their goals and their active engagement as learners.

Leadership is a big topic in Middle School as students are eager to know more about themselves, how to work with others, and make a positive impact in their sphere of influence. Club meetings take center stage in the daily schedule to allow time and space for students' creativity and initiatives within a collaborative structure. They find a deeper connection between their knowledge and interests and develop teamwork and advocacy skills in groups like Sustainability Club, Literary Magazine, Math Team, and Robotics.

Special Programs

412 Athletic and Educational Building

Spence's state-of-the-art athletics and education center opens a new vista of K-12 opportunities for Spence students.

The facility includes a regulation-sized gymnasium, NYC's premier Squash Center with nine courts, a multi-purpose performing arts space, and the Brizendine Center for Ecology. The Ecology Center includes a laboratory classroom, a teaching kitchen, greenhouse, and rooftop garden.



Ecology Residencies

The Brizendine Center for Ecology at 412 offers the fertile space of growing a K-12 interdisciplinary ecology curriculum, inspiring programming that is urban and focused on sustainability. Each Middle School grade participates in an eco-residency program. In particular, the Grade 5 residency is a nine-day interdisciplinary program where students learn how

engineers, architects, and planners design safe and beautiful structures in different environments and consider how a house becomes a home through cultural attachment.

Grade 5 - What Makes a House a Home?

Grade 6 - Water Security

Grade 7 - Resilient City Systems

Grade 8 - Political Ecology



G.E.T.S. (Girl's Empowerment Through STEM)

GETS strives to empower Middle School students who want to engage in the scientific world beyond the Middle School science curriculum through mentorship with Upper School students who are also passionate about STEM.



Independent Science Research in Middle School

Spence is piloting a program inspired by the Upper School Independent Science Research as a club during this academic year. Next fall Spence will launch a two-year elective-style program for Grades 7-8. The Middle School Science Research program will offer students a dedicated space to delve deeper into their scientific interests. Through this program, students will

understand the iterative nature of scientific inquiry, enhance their scientific skill set, and envision themselves as integral contributors to the broader realm of scientific exploration.

Athletics



Team sports are a way of life. 94% of Middle School students participate in the athletics program.

The Middle and Upper School athletics program is always evolving to better serve its students. Spence has been on the leading edge of program growth among its peer schools in the Athletic Association of Independent Schools of New York (AAIS-NYC). They were the first in this group

to offer cross country for Grade 5-6 and Grade 7-8, squash for Grade 7-8, and indoor track. The Athletics and Physical Education Department strives to meet current interests and also provide opportunities for students to explore new pursuits. Through their participation in athletics, girls incorporate a wide range of physical and interpersonal skills in an interdisciplinary sport experience, mirroring and enhancing the learning that takes place in the classroom.

Head of Middle School Leadership Opportunities and Challenges

The Spence Middle School is a vibrant, joyful, noisy, and spirited community that offers an immensely rewarding opportunity for a warm, confident, and accessible leader who is committed to educating young women for lives of passion and purpose. There is a positive momentum that moves the wheels at Spence in remarkable ways – it is the synergy of students and teachers who are deeply committed to creating and contributing to a learning community that is dynamic and supportive.

The Head of Middle School position is a demanding one, requiring a leader with deep intellect, extensive knowledge of and love for Middle School students, and abundant emotional intelligence.

The Spence School's location in New York City offers an array of opportunities and resources for its students. The next Head of Middle School should be excited to live and work in New York City, one of the most diverse and culturally rich urban environments in the world, and to build programming with organizations which have included The American Museum of Natural History, New York Historical Society, Museo del Barrio, the Billion Oyster Project, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Asia Society. Opportunities abound to explore even more ways to use the city as an extended classroom.

Among the specific opportunities and challenges awaiting the next Head of Middle School are the following:

The Middle School is a warm, close-knit environment for girls. The next Head of Middle School will be expected to build upon the work already begun in establishing a culture where girls are kind, respectful, and supportive of each other.

The Head of Middle School is a pivotal member of the teaching and learning team which focuses on the academic life of the school, K–12. They play a lead role in hiring for some positions each year, working closely with appropriate department chairs as necessary.

Spence's administrative structure includes department heads, grade deans, the Dean of Students, the Director of Teaching and Learning, and the Director of Curriculum, among others. As a result, the Middle School Head position requires a skilled administrator and highly

collaborative leader who can effectively contribute to decision-making in areas of shared responsibility, including curriculum, faculty management, and equity and inclusion.

As Spence continues to implement its strategic vision for teaching and learning, the Head of Middle School will be a leader in shaping a curriculum specifically designed for Middle School age girls and to re-envision the Middle School experience as a part of the schedule design and strategic planning process.

Because the Middle School begins in grade five and ends in grade eight, the program serves a wide range of developmental needs. The Middle School Head must bring a deep knowledge and understanding of girls' development to help lead teaching and learning that best serve the needs of girls in each stage.

Fifth grade homeroom teachers and the deans of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades oversee and advise girls both individually and in groups. These leaders in the Middle School are eager to collaborate on shaping a cohesive advisory curriculum and will look to the Middle School Head to coordinate and lead those initiatives.

The Middle School Head will work closely with other division heads to create structures and procedures for smooth transitions from grades four to five and eight to nine.

Spence prides itself on promoting students' individuality, agency, and voice, while at the same time seeking to build a deep sense of community, integrity, and respect for others. The Head of Middle School plays a vital role in balancing these sometimes-competing interests by setting and enforcing ethical and behavioral standards and by skillfully navigating conflicts as they arise.

The Middle School Head will work closely with the Admissions Office to help select and retain Middle Schools students.

Who Should Apply?

The Spence School offers a dynamic and supportive work environment, competitive salaries, multiple opportunities for professional growth, and a generous benefits package. Spence is committed to an equitable and inclusive program and a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are therefore especially encouraged to apply.

Qualifications and Experiences

- Substantial Middle School teaching and leadership experience, preferably in an independent school, with a broad understanding of school operations
- Demonstrated experience and a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- A master's degree or higher

Leadership Style and Personal Qualities

- An innovative educational leader who is eager to join a senior administrative team dedicated to a robust flow of ideas and a sense of possibility
- A genuine interest in and appreciation of Middle School students and teachers
- A unifying leader and team builder with sound judgment and strong instincts who is transparent, fair, and models empathy, compassion, and kindness
- An approachable, accessible, and gracious leader who is eager to be engaged in the community and comfortable in the spotlight
- A skilled decision-maker and manager of change
- A strong presence with students and faculty
- Interest in and availability for connecting with and caring for families
- An understanding of identity development in girls
- Knowledge of curriculum and structures that enable the best learning in the Middle School years
- The ability to wrestle with big ideas as well as manage the day-to-day details of running a division
- A sense of humor
- Flexibility
- A commitment to helping girls develop empathy and character

Anticipated Search Calendar



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|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Application Deadline | November 29, 2023 |
| Semifinalist Interviews | December 15-16, 2023 |
| Finalist Visits: | January 18-26, 2024 |
| Appointment: | February, 2024 |
| Starting Date: | July, 2024 |

Application Requirements and Search Process

DRG Talent Advisory Group is conducting this search on behalf of The Spence School. Interested candidates should submit, as soon as possible but no later than November 29, 2023, materials that include the following:

- A cover letter indicating why they are particularly interested in and qualified for the position
- A current resume
- A statement of educational leadership philosophy
- An additional writing sample (newsletter, talk, article, etc.)
- A list of three references with contact information (references will not be contacted until the finalist stage of the search)

To apply for this position, please click [HERE](#).

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