



## Director of People and Culture

Become Athenian’s first-ever Director of People and Culture to lead Human Resources and help shape the culture of Athenian. This senior-level position was created to meet a clear strategic priority.

Reporting to the Head of School and serving on the Head’s Advisory Committee (senior management leadership team), the Director of People and Culture (“Director”) is responsible for developing and implementing a people and culture strategy in support of the School’s strategic priorities. The Director ensures effective execution of programs and initiatives in talent acquisition, culture change, diversity and inclusion, performance management, talent management and development, employee relations, total rewards and recognition, training, change management, and organizational effectiveness. In support of those efforts, the position requires experience in administering and evaluating survey data across constituencies in order to understand institutional needs regarding the school culture and the educational program.

The position requires a highly experienced HR and culture-building professional with a good understanding of how to lead in a school environment, strong organizational skills, high emotional intelligence, the ability to collaborate across the organization and build trusting relationships, and the ability to prioritize while managing multiple priorities.



## **ATHENIAN'S MISSION**

The Athenian School prepares students for the rigorous expectations of college and for a life of purpose and personal fulfillment. We offer a challenging academic program with a difference: intellectual inquiry is active, learning is interactive, the disciplines are interrelated, and analysis and creativity thrive simultaneously. The acquisition of knowledge becomes authentic and joyous.

We cultivate the personal qualities of each student to become an integrated human being with integrity, strong moral character, aesthetic sensitivity, and physical well-being. The Athenian community requires students to face life directly through open communication, while developing their inner strength to exceed their perceived potential and emerge as compassionate, responsible adults.

We instill an appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and cultures, society, and the natural world. We value the power and beauty of multiculturalism within our diverse community. We embrace the principles of democratic governance, stewardship of the environment, respect for human dignity, and service as a way of life.

By providing an atmosphere of intellectual, artistic, and physical challenge within the warmth of a nurturing community, we develop in our students the confidence and skills required to meet the complexities of their future.



## **ROUND SQUARE PILLARS**

Athenian is a founding member of Round Square (described later in this document); as such, the Pillars of Round Square are a foundational piece of Athenian's core values. Round Square is an international consortium of schools that share a commitment, beyond academics, to programs and educational opportunities that are designed to educationally integrate the following six Pillars:

1. Internationalism
2. Democracy
3. Environmentalism
4. Adventure
5. Leadership
6. Service

## **THE ATHENIAN WAY**

The Athenian School was founded in 1965 by Dyke Brown, a student of experiential education leader Kurt Hahn. Dyke envisioned a school in the image of Periclean Athens – the full development of each citizen. Intellectual growth, fitness of body and character, commitment to humane values, aesthetic sensitivity, and readiness for adult citizenship and leadership are Athenian's objectives for each student. Nearly 53 years later, Athenian's ideals have become a model for education with a strong reputation, robust enrollment, and healthy finances.

Respect for student ideas and leadership runs deep and, to reflect our value of equality and mutual respect, all community members are on a first-name basis. To foster intrinsic motivation, we do not give academic or other awards.

The Athenian School was built on 75 acres of idyllic land at the foot of Mt. Diablo. Founded as a boarding high school, Athenian continues to be a 24/7 community of learners. In 1979, the Middle School was added, accepting day students in grades six through eight. The demand for an Athenian education from the local community prompted the School to begin admitting more day students in the 1970s, and the School made a transition from its start as a boarding school to primarily a day community. Today, the School is 85% day students yet remains a proud boarding institution. More than 140 people live on campus, including students, faculty, staff, children, and their pets. The residential community gathers regularly on and off campus for meals and fun activities. The informal opportunities to spend time with boarding students, colleagues, and residential families foster a warm environment, creating a home away from home for our boarding students. Along with many new facilities and a larger number of day students, Athenian remains a close-knit, thriving learning community.

The Athenian School is 30 miles east of San Francisco, nestled among the Danville, Diablo, and Blackhawk



communities. Danville is known for its small-town atmosphere and quality of life, including highly rated public elementary schools. Athenian's land opens up to wild space on Mt. Diablo for outdoor adventure in our backyard. A massive solar array provides over seventy-five percent of the School's power and is just one of many ways Athenian strives to be a green campus. Our proximity to Silicon Valley, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco provides endless opportunities for dining, cultural, and social experiences.

At Athenian, the rigorous academic program is delivered in a way that resonates and remains with students throughout their lives – because children learn by doing. By applying what is learned in class to real-world situations, Athenian students construct meaning out of research opportunities, realistic lab activities, critical thinking exercises, and fact-based analysis. Whether in or out of the classroom, this approach allows students to incorporate their learning with their living, laying a strong foundation for a life of intellectual exploration and meaningful contribution.

## **THE ATHENIAN EXPERIENCE**

In classes that average 15 students, Athenian's Upper School and Middle School faculty enliven the classroom with their love of teaching and learning. They engage students and awaken their imaginations by making connections, getting to know them, and guiding them in the direction that best suits their interests and ambitions. At Athenian, students see life as an intellectual adventure and proudly shine under the academic spotlight. Athenians are explorers; students discover uncharted territory in and out of the classroom, seeking out new approaches and perspectives.

All students take fine arts, world language, humanities (literature and history), math, science, and PE classes. In the Middle School, students take core classes on Monday through Thursday. Every Friday is a Focus Day, a day-long project-based and experiential lesson that ties together student learning across disciplines and fosters both the soft and hard skills our students need. In the Upper School, students' weekly schedules currently include a block rotation of short and long period classes, community service period, health classes, community and democratic town meetings, and advisory.



In addition to our core curriculum, Middle School students take electives including athletic team practices, creative writing, photography, airplane making and more. Upper School students have a wide range of electives from which to choose, including engineering and design, performing arts, entrepreneurship, internships, teaching assistant roles, and independent studies. We are proud to be a member of the Bay Area BlendEd Consortium which offers a set of blended classes combining face-to-face and online instruction bringing together students from four other Bay Area independent high schools.



Athenian cultivates each individual's strengths and passions. The opportunities to explore leadership, social justice, equity and inclusion, world cultures, outdoor adventure, global perspectives, service, and personal passions are endless. Students are encouraged to participate in the governance of the School through democratic Town Meetings and student government, leading community service projects, and establishing clubs around areas of interest. Positive experiences with depth and breadth occur naturally for our students with a certain inevitability.

Athenian is a vibrant, innovative, and values-based school. Parents report they are very satisfied with the educational experiences their children are receiving, both in and out of the classroom; teachers consider it a privilege to work on a campus that not only states a mission but lives it, and students thrive in a joyful, dynamic, and engaging learning environment. Given our commitment to equity and inclusion, the cultural competency of all our adults is integral to our mission.

### **Focus Days**

Focus Days are a signature and defining component of the Athenian Middle School experience. Every Friday, the Middle School breaks from its daily schedule for daylong activities that bring together elements from multiple disciplines; this allows for experiential and interdisciplinary education, deep intellectual investigation, and collaborative learning. Focus Days are tied directly to the work being done in core classes and allow students to cement their learning. Focus Days take many forms such as field trips, science labs, history simulations, and community service. Themes range from Salon Day (role-playing historical figures) to Pool Volume Day (mathematics, science, and collaborative problem solving).

### **The Athenian Wilderness Experience (AWE)**

As part of our commitment to developing empathy, resilience, and an appreciation for and comfort in the outdoors, our students participate in a required 26-day backpacking trip during their junior year in either the High Sierras or Death Valley. Learning to collaborate, problem-solve, and empathize, students work together to navigate off-trail terrain, cook group meals, rock climb, and set up camp. Our entire community is affected by this program, as the students' absence is felt by all; they return with energy, inner confidence, and new perspectives that infuse the school community at large. One of several rites of passages, AWE is a central part of the Athenian experience that exists free from technology, routine, homework, and other daily responsibilities.



### **Engineering and Design**

Athenian has come to be a leader in the maker movement, combining curriculum and machinery for hands-on learning opportunities. Students discover how to create and make through classes in the fine arts, sciences, and increasingly humanities. Upper School students can work in Athenian's Maker Studio in science and engineering classes, Athenian's robotics collective, and the airplane project (where yes, our students build real, skyworthy airplanes). Students are empowered to innovate, create, make, build, and collaborate as they learn design thinking, shop safety, project-management skills, and an "I can do that!" attitude.



### **Round Square**

Round Square is an international consortium of more than 100 schools that believe that International Understanding, Education for Democracy, Environmental Stewardship, Adventure, Leadership, and Service are integral to educating students. Upper School students have the opportunity to participate in Round Square activities, including attending an international conference, going on exchange, hosting exchange students who come to Athenian, and participating in service projects around the world. Over 40% of our sophomore class have gone on exchange in recent years, in addition to several dozen students each year participating in other Round Square activities. Our Middle School students participate in a variety of conferences and exchanges through Young Round Square.

### **Athletics**

Athenian encourages all of its students to participate and represent the School in interscholastic athletics. The athletics program focuses on developing student-athletes who display good sportsmanship, are positive role models, and follow through on commitment. Stressing team over individual achievement results in teams that have strong social bonds beyond grade levels. Our students

participate in athletics in extraordinary numbers, with 83% of our Upper School student body playing in at least one team sport.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Social Justice (DEIS) is an intrinsic part of The Athenian School's DNA. It was the first integrated, co- educational, co-boarding school west of the Mississippi, and its first Head of School was a Black man at a time when school integration was a taboo subject in much of the country. However, the School did not have an Office of DEIS in those days, instead leaning on the teacher-student relationship, the School's position in the Bay Area, and its leadership in Round Square as an organization that championed internationalism and multiculturalism as one of its key pillars up until the 1990s. Then, realizing that diversity and inclusion needed a special eye, an office for Diversity and Inclusion was created. This part-time office quickly grew to a full-time role, evolving into the Office for Equity and Inclusion. During this time Athenian made great strides in measuring inclusion, becoming a leader in Inclusion Dashboard work in the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). In the few years since, however, turnover in the position has not afforded the work the consistent focus it requires. A study was undertaken in 2020, involving a former Dean of Equity and Inclusion and members of the community (trustee, parent, faculty, and staff members and students) to look at the School's collected data and suggest a way forward. Their work resulted in the creation of a more executive and holistic role called the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice.

In addition, the School has made significant efforts toward attracting and retaining employees from underrepresented communities. Among other initiatives, Athenian helped to found the Pipeline Collaborative, a network of schools and educational practitioners of color from across the country who connect directly with local colleges in order to inform, mentor, and grow the next generation of teachers at independent schools.

Equity, inclusion, and diversity are much more than social principles at Athenian; they are educational imperatives. Upholding them is at the core of Athenian's philosophy and a necessary precursor to meeting the School's mission goal of graduating culturally competent, global citizens who enter the world as community builders. Therefore, Athenian counts on its students, families, faculty, staff, and board members to support this ideal and respect the diversity of our community of varied race, national and/or ethnic origin, socioeconomic class, faith, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Required course work, all-school activities, student clubs, and co-curricular programs advance equity, inclusion, diversity, and social justice at Athenian. Athenian is committed to upholding and protecting the dignity and worth of all people, recognizing everyone's shared humanity.

## **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE and CULTURE**

Change Management/Organization Leadership:

- Serve as coach and sparring partner to Head of School on organizational topics
- Design strategic initiatives to ensure organizational effectiveness
- Partner with administrative team to ensure effective organizational structure, design, and staffing models
- Assess and facilitate organizational design and leadership changes

Talent Strategy:

- Partner with school administrators to implement regular talent reviews, organization reviews, career development planning, performance reviews, workforce planning, organization health assessments and surveys, etc.
  - Administer and assess the variety of school surveys (e.g. employees, parents, students) in order to best direct institutional resources
- Identify and source for future talent needs
  - Support the recruitment of new employees by coordinating with the two Division Heads, Deans of Faculty, and Department Chairs re: faculty hiring, and the respective Administrative Team members re: staff hiring
  - Drive progress toward diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and ensure diversity of talent is recruited, hired, and retained

Employee Relations and Communications:

- Partner with leadership team to anticipate, identify, and facilitate resolution of employee relations issues
  - Conduct and/or manage investigations, as appropriate
- Partner with the Head of School, COO, and Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice as part of a school-wide effort to create a more fair and inclusive Athenian workplace and community
- Develop and revise guidelines and policies related to human resource practices (e.g. employee handbook)
  - Maintain Title IX policies and procedures and work with the HR consultant and other school management in the Title IX complaint process
  - Responsible for the Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP) and the School's overall safety plan. Member of the Risk Management Committee
  - Manage personnel records
  - Inform management regarding governmental regulations/laws and compliance issues
  - Implement and oversee appropriate training including employee handbook policies, safety training, and required training vis-à-vis government regulations
  - Analyze and recommend compensation and benefit policies to establish competitive programs and ensure compliance with legal requirements
- Counsel leaders and staff consistent with Athenian policies/practices, legal considerations, and company priorities – advocating for both school and employee concerns
- Partner with communications function to ensure effective internal and external communications

Total Rewards Management:

- Collaborate with the Controller regarding benefits administration
- Implement and communicate compensation and benefits programs to successfully attract, motivate, and retain employees
- Maintain rewards and recognition processes

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The Director of People and Culture is an inaugural position at the Athenian School. We seek candidates who are energized by the prospect of bringing an important function to life at our School. The Director will step into the role leading the following priorities:

**Develop and Implement a People and Culture Strategy in Support of the School's Strategic Priorities:** As educators look ahead past the pandemic, there is an understanding that the way we operate moving forward will change. The Director will join an evolving leadership team at a pivotal moment. The Director will take the lead in building Athenian's culture and articulating its principles. The Director will serve as a mentor to other members of the senior leadership in advising how to create a culture that is innovative, collaborative, and trusting.

**Support Athenian's Efforts around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Social Justice (DEIS):** Since its founding, DEIS has been a core principle at The Athenian School. As the School continues to evolve and expand its efforts in this space, the Director will partner with the new Director of DEIS and other senior leaders to be a thought leader and to create a more team-based approach to undertaking these important initiatives.

**Look for Efficiencies and Best Practices in HR:** In the past, the human resources functions at The Athenian School have been outsourced. In this newly created position, the Director will lead the effort and build out the internal human resources operation. This will include developing innovative and sophisticated processes and procedures related to talent acquisition, performance management, talent management and development, employee relations, total rewards and recognition, training, change management, etc.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The ideal candidate will embody key elements of the desired expertise, experience, and qualities. This is an aspirational list, and we encourage candidates to apply who strive for, but may not currently possess, all of these qualities.

- Passion for Athenian mission and values, ideally with significant experience in an independent school or other nonprofit environment
- Bachelor's degree and progressive experience with increasing responsibility in HR is required; a Master's degree in Business, I/O Psychology or Human Resources is preferred
- Participating/contributing as part of a senior leadership/top team
- Successful track record as a Functional HR Leader, ideally with 5+ years of experience in providing work direction and leadership to people and teams
- Experience in HR strategy development and execution
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Demonstrated experience in helping to shape a positive culture and a great place to learn and work
- Problem solving: Well-honed analytical and problem-solving skills. Creative, risk-taking and results-oriented mindset
- Champion for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice: Demonstrated ability to collaborate across internal/external DEIS channels to incorporate and influence organizational outputs with significant impact
- Influencing: Communicates with impact. Uses tailored communication and creates authentic and trusting relationships to influence constituents, especially related to organizational planning and design. Confidence in own ideas as demonstrated by external conference speaking engagements, published articles, participation in panel discussions, industry association work, or teaching. Ideally has a good understanding of social media and how to best leverage it for Athenian
- Consulting: Strong coaching, consulting, and facilitation skills

- Leadership: Demonstrated ability to accomplish work through others, including leading project teams. Demonstrated experience in initiating and leading change, including modeling the importance, motivating others, managing the key drivers of change, and overcoming obstacles. The courage to stand up for what they believe in and to speak up and share ideas
- Exceptional ability to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders including but not limited to faculty, administration, parents, third parties, etc. Reaches across boundaries internally and externally to develop an extensive network of partnerships. Experience working with a virtual workforce. Ability to manage a complex set of stakeholders
- Flexible: Demonstrated career flexibility and adaptation skills (e.g., successful industry or company changes with minimal learning curve; cross-cultural experience and flexibility if dictated by scope of organization)
- Self-Management: Self-directed work style, proactive, able to work autonomously with minimal direction. Customer-centric and delivers results with high quality and with a sense of urgency. Demonstrated ability to prioritize and manage multiple projects simultaneously
- Computer literate e.g., spreadsheet, presentation, and word processing software

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Please send all nominations, applications, including a cover letter and resume, in confidence to:



Nishant Mehta, Partner & Independent Schools Practice Leader  
Sherry Coleman, Partner  
Lindsay Allison, Senior Associate  
Erin Meissner, Associate  
[AthenianPeopleCulture@storbecksearch.com](mailto:AthenianPeopleCulture@storbecksearch.com)

*The Athenian School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, faith, sex, gender or gender expression, age, ability, sexual orientation, familial or marital status. The Athenian School is actively seeking to create a more culturally diverse school community and as such, we encourage people of color and members of the LGBTIQ community to apply. Athenian's salary and benefits are competitive and include medical, vision, and dental insurance, a retirement plan, a smoke-free environment, and a daily prepared lunch.*

