

JOB SPECIFICATION

ORGANIZATION: Highline Academy Charter Schools
POSITION: Executive Director
LOCATION: Denver, CO
REPORTS TO: Highline Academy Charter Schools Board of Directors

Background

Founded over twenty years ago, Highline Academy is a tuition-free Denver Public School (DPS) charter school serving over 1100 students with two locations, offering a whole child curriculum focused on inclusive excellence and rigorous academics. Highline Academy Charter School exists to foster a diverse and equitable community of youth and adults striving together for academic, personal, and civic excellence, while celebrating each child's uniqueness and empowering them to achieve their fullest potential.

Highline Academy's mission-driven culture is a powerful unifying force across both campuses, anchored in the organization's REACH values: responsibility, empowerment, aspiration, citizenship, and honesty. Elementary students participate in a weekly REACH class, where they learn and practice these values. Through REACH and supportive school practices, Highline students benefit from being part of a caring, safe school community that emphasizes belonging, socio-emotional learning, civic engagement, and celebrates diverse cultures. Educator voice and empowerment are another hallmark of Highline's academic model. Teachers leverage data cycles, small group instruction, individualized learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and connect academic content to real-world learning experiences. Highline teachers provide input on and shape the curriculum to meet the needs of the students, families, and communities they serve. Both Highline Academy campuses were rated as "Green," or meeting expectations on Colorado's most recent School Performance Framework, which evaluates academic achievement and student growth.

Highline Academy Southeast opened in 2004 and is a Kindergarten through 8th-grade campus in South Central Denver, serving nearly 600 students from many different countries and cultural backgrounds. Highline Academic Southeast is a recipient of the 2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Award, which recognizes schools for overall academic excellence or for progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Highline is one of only four schools in Colorado and one of just 15 charter schools in the country to receive this prestigious award. Highline Academy Southeast has also been recognized as a U.S. News Best Elementary and Middle School and a top 5 Denver middle school, receiving an 'A' by Colorado School Grades.

[Highline Academy Northeast](#) opened in 2014 and serves nearly 600 students from preschool (ECE) through 5th-grade campus in the Green Valley Ranch community of Northeast Denver. As Denver's fastest-growing neighborhood—and the only region in the city projected to keep expanding through 2030—Green Valley Ranch is attracting more families and students each year, strengthening the school's vibrant and diverse community. Highline Academy Northeast is recognized as a top-performing DPS school for multi-language learners, with students growing in their competency at one of the highest rates in the district. Highline Academy Northeast is also a top-performing ECE school, receiving 4 out of 5 stars through Colorado Shines for academic excellence and early childhood development. The campus serves a diverse student body speaking over 26 languages and representing more than 50 countries.

For more information about Highline Academy Charter Schools, visit their [website](#).

Opportunity

Highline Academy is in an exciting moment in its history and evolution. Through a robust stakeholder engagement process, Highline has identified a clear community desire to expand upon and accelerate its academic growth and attainment, maintain and deepen its organizational commitment to inclusive excellence in public education, and prepare pathways to expansion. The new Executive Director will be charged with collaborating with school teams, the Board, and the Highline community on a three-year strategic planning process, which will set the course for the 2026-2029 school years and clearly define the priorities, goals, conditions, and pathways for growth, so that Highline can expand its impact for diverse communities in Denver.

Ushering Highline Academy into its next chapter, the new Executive Director (ED) will work with the Highline community to develop a vision, systems, and practices that best serve the unique needs of each Highline child. The Executive Director should honor the success and reputation Highline has built, while bringing innovative ideas and structures to define and implement a unified “Highline Way.” The ED will ensure that Highline fully realizes its mission and unlocks the potential of every student in its rapidly evolving community.

The Board seeks an experienced, visionary, strategic, and bold educational leader who is capable of developing the teams, people, and infrastructure necessary to grow while maintaining a high-quality academic program for students and families. The ideal candidate is a champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion who embraces challenges, invests in relationships, delivers results, and will be a credible, visible leader.

The ED reports to the Board of Directors and oversees all instructional, cultural, operational, financial, and community/external relations aspects of the organization, in collaboration with the leadership team, which is comprised of campus principals and network staff.

The key priorities for Highline Academy’s new Executive Director are:

- **Instructional Leadership and Academic Alignment:** Create, codify, and implement academic systems to support both campuses in driving strong student achievement outcomes while honoring and serving the unique needs of each community.
- **Strategic and Growth Leadership:** Partner with the Board, campus and network staff, and community members to clearly define the organizational growth strategy, to provide more students and families with access to Highline’s academic model in the future.
- **Organizational Culture:** Build a healthy, engaged adult culture anchored in Highline’s REACH values, and the organizational infrastructure (talent, operations, collaboration, etc.) to support this culture.
- **External Relations:** Forge new and maintain existing partnerships to advance Highline’s mission and ensure financial sustainability, while navigating a dynamic educational and political environment.

Responsibilities

Strategic and Academic Leadership

- Collaboratively create and implement a multi-year strategic plan that continues to drive strong student achievement outcomes and lays the groundwork for growth;
- Set clear academic, operational, cultural, advancement, financial, and growth goals and priorities aligned with the strategic plan and manage toward them, adapting as necessary given changes in the internal and external environment;
- Design and implement progress monitoring systems, review progress towards measures of success, and hold staff accountable for results;
- Codify and clarify the common academic and operational systems and structures across both campuses, communicate these systems to key stakeholders, and create mechanisms to measure their impact;
- Support and coach principals in their school-level strategic planning, ensuring plans are aligned with the organizational strategic plan and meet the needs of the unique communities they serve;
- Ensure compliance with all rules, regulations, and laws governing Highline’s charter.

Organizational Management and Culture

- Lead, develop, and coach a high-performing team, including principals, that meets the needs of a diverse student body, delivers strong academic outcomes, and produces high satisfaction and retention of staff, scholars, and families;
- Foster a culture grounded in equity; ensure staff are supported and held accountable for modeling Highline’s values and contributing to a healthy organizational culture;
- Create strong communication and collaboration channels between network and campus staff and leadership;
- Cultivate and nurture authentic relationships with staff, students, and families that reflect Highline’s REACH values and mission.

External Partnership, Engagement, and Sustainability

- Externally champion the vision, mission, goals, and values of Highline Academy Charter Schools, including speaking publicly and communicating widely about the work and accomplishments of the organization;
- Build and expand local partnerships with key community leaders, government officials, philanthropic organizations, and other community-based organizations to support students and families;
- Interact regularly with the charter authorizer, DPS, to ensure compliance and long-term sustainability;
- In collaboration with the Board of Directors, ensure that Highline Academy has a strong long-term financial plan; manage the organizational budget of approximately \$20 MM while increasing funding opportunities over time.

Partnership with the Board of Directors

- Continue to develop an engaged and active Board in close partnership with the Board Chair;
- Regularly update, communicate, and strategize with the Board of Directors by transparently sharing issues, risks, opportunities, priorities, outcomes, policy review, board directives, personnel matters, and fiscal matters related to the strategic plan, as well as organizational and political context; provide both responsive and proactive communication that engenders trust;
- Receive and incorporate Board feedback on performance annually;
- Perform other duties as are prescribed from time to time by the Board.

Qualifications

The ideal Executive Director candidate will bring the following experiences, skills, and mindsets/values:

Required Experience, Knowledge, and Skills

- Significant professional experience in leadership positions with increasing responsibility, including successful management of a team of adults in a public charter school, district school system, or educational organization with ambitious organizational, fiscal, and student achievement goals;
- Experience leading at a high-performing charter or district elementary or middle school with a diverse student population;
- Demonstrated experience advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools or non-profit organizations;
- Deep knowledge of best practices and innovations in curriculum, instruction, and assessment to support academic excellence;
- Ability to collaboratively create and implement a strategic plan with clear metrics for success, and lead a team to execute the plan;
- Experience successfully building, managing, developing, and retaining high-performing teams;
- Experience leading, investing, and motivating stakeholders in a shared vision for an organization, and defining strategies to operationalize that vision;
- Experience building and stewarding external partnerships and serving as the external face of an organization;
- Experience creating, improving, and scaling organizational systems and infrastructure;
- Superior relationship management and communication skills; skilled at listening, mediating, inspiring, and uniting diverse voices;
- Successful experience leading an organization, school, or network to grow or scale responsibly;
- Strong financial management/oversight skills;
- A bachelor's degree or higher in education, school administration, business, or a related field from an accredited college or university.

Preferred Experience, Knowledge, and Skills

- At least 10 years of professional experience;
- Experience managing a large organizational budget of approximately \$10MM or more;
- Fundraising/development experience;

- Innovative leadership experience launching new initiatives or programs;
- Experience successfully working with (ideally reporting to) boards;
- A master's degree or higher in Education;
- Classroom teaching experience;
- Multilingual skills;
- Connection to and/or understanding of the Denver (or Colorado) educational landscape is highly preferred.

Mindset/Values

- Alignment with and passion for Highline's mission, academic model, and REACH values, and an appreciation for the organization's history and legacy;
- Approaches all decisions with an equity focus and consistently connects shared values to decision-making;
- Deeply committed to dismantling systems and practices that perpetuate inequities and creating the conditions that enable all students to thrive;
- Models follow-through and builds trust with others through accountability;
- A deep-seated commitment to leading with authenticity, integrity, and transparency;
- Evidence of well-developed emotional intelligence, humility, growth mindset, and receptiveness to feedback.

Compensation and Application

The salary range for this position is \$145,000 - \$160,000 and is commensurate with experience.

Highline Academy Charter Schools understands that there are many paths to acquiring experience and that lived experience can provide important skills and abilities. Therefore, Highline welcomes candidates from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds for this role, including those who have demonstrated transferable skills to carry out the major duties outlined in this job description.

Highline Academy is committed to creating a diverse work environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. Highline Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, parental status, veteran status, or any other protected status under applicable laws.

Initial Application Deadline: December 31st, 2025.