



**George Jackson Academy**  
New York, New York  
**Head of School Opportunity**  
*for July 2020*

George Jackson Academy, GJA, ([www.gjacademy.org](http://www.gjacademy.org)) opened its doors at 104 St. Mark's Place in the heart of NYC's East Village in the fall of 2003. An independent boy's school in the [Lasallian tradition](#), GJA serves approximately 125 students Grades 5-8, and develops young men of character with a commitment to academic excellence, courage, personal honor, and integrity as guiding principles.

GJA is not a typical independent school. It educates bright boys from low-income families, from a number of NYC neighborhoods, including South Bronx, East New York, and Harlem; the students' families invest what they can—often as little as \$30 a month—to give their sons a better education than neighborhood schools can offer. The school provides a strong academic program that offers life-transforming education and specifically programs that address educational disparities to young men growing up in poverty. With a student body that is 98% students of color (48% African-American, 29% Hispanic, 12% Asian-American, and 9% Multi-Racial), GJA families are also among New York's poorest: 78% live below Area Median Income, with 28% extremely low income, living on less than 30% of Area Median Income. GJA raises 90% of its operating budget—\$2.7M a year—to offer this exceptional education, and to provide every one of its students with financial aid.

Brother Brian Carty founded the school to honor his former student, friend, and supporter George Jackson. Jackson, the oldest of four children, was raised in Harlem by a determined single mother. Jackson graduated from Harvard and went on to a successful career in Hollywood as a producer and as CEO of Motown Records. More importantly, George Jackson is remembered as a man whose “heart was inclusive,” who “was about family,” who was “grateful, honorable, loyal, firm and strong.” When George Jackson died unexpectedly in 2000 at the age of 42, Brother Brian Carty challenged Jackson's friends and family to help make Jackson's dream of opening a school to educate young talented, economically disadvantaged boys a reality.

While the school is non-sectarian, it is a school community that encourages the practice of each individual's faith. There is a commitment to and respect for sharing the diversity of cultures and faiths represented in the school community. GJA is a boy's school reinvented: every student learns to code in Scratch and Python and studies visual arts at the Whitney Museum. Students dance with American Ballet Theater and practice mindfulness meditation with a Harvard-trained practitioner. Graduates head to some of the best high schools and colleges in the country. 2019 graduates are attending, among other schools: Church Farm School, Groton, Thatcher, Fordham, Peddie, Cate, Poly Prep, Bronx Collaborative, and Phillips Andover. GJA has literally been a transformational experience for many of its students and graduates, providing opportunities for

these boys they would not otherwise have. A staggering 97% of GJA's college-age alums attend or have graduated from four-year colleges.

GJA seeks an energetic, enthusiastic educational leader who is deeply committed to the school's mission to serve as the next Head of School beginning July 2020.

### **Mission**

The mission of George Jackson Academy is to educate, inspire, and empower boys with courage, integrity, excellence and leadership. Students, regardless of their economic circumstances, are presented with rigorous academic challenges that enable them to realize their highest potential. Founded in the Lasallian tradition—the head, the heart, and the spirit—the school community is committed to graduating scholars and young men of character who excel in high school and beyond.

### **Facilities**

George Jackson Academy has been housed in a former Catholic school building in the East Village since its founding. Recently renovated, in time for the opening of the 2018-19 school year, the 12,000 square foot building has been reconfigured to better support GJA's students. The renovation created flexible learning spaces, added more interactive tools and technologies, and modernized tech and electrical infrastructure. In addition, the library was expanded and a dedicated space for counseling and the arts was carved out. The project created a visual arts studio, a music room for practice and small group lessons in partnership with Juilliard School, and a space for American Ballet Theatre-led dance performances. The building is designed to foster an environment where the GJA boys will thrive.

The building does not have gymnasium space. Currently a nearby park and a gym in a nearby Boys and Girls Club are utilized for Physical Education classes and recreation, although a recent sale of the Boys and Girls Club building may end that current arrangement.

### **Program**

GJA's goal is to provide a unique and challenging curriculum in an environment where each boy is asked and supported to be his best; students are challenged intellectually and issues of the spirit are respected equally. Boys are known and supported in an educational community that nurtures their specific needs and bolsters them during their most formative years. Students support one another as they work to create a community that celebrates integrity, personal honor and emotional courage, learning and embracing the value of brotherhood. Boys are challenged by peers and mentors to meet and surpass high expectations and to develop their talents to maximum potential. Beyond the daily curriculum, GJA has established a number of partnerships in the community, utilizing the city as a classroom. In addition to those mentioned above, these partnerships include work with Whitney Museum of Art, Fencers Club, and WriteON.

GJA's mission is to serve bright boys from low-income families, allowing them the freedom to express their intelligence in a community of smart peers. GJA boys excel as writers, artists, engineers, and mathematicians. Graduates report that their GJA education prepared them for

9th grade at the most rigorous high schools in the nation. GJA students are articulate, engaging, thoughtful, insightful, and have a good sense of what is happening in the world.

Along with diverse academic programs, George Jackson Academy recognizes that social and emotional supports have a huge impact in helping students overcome the challenges of poverty. One-on-one and small group counseling serve all students as needed, with daily advisory meetings and leadership retreats. The impact of these programs is measurable: George Jackson Academy has been cited as a model program for boys of color in *The Atlantic*, in *Quartz News*, and in nationally-featured work with NYU Psychologist and Board Member Niobe Way. Enrichment, high school and college placement programs give each graduate and his family the tools and support to succeed and lead in high school, college, and beyond. The model works: 100% graduate high school, and 97% matriculate to selective 4-year colleges and universities.

### **Healthy Masculinity**

Since the school's founding, GJA students have referred to one another as "brothers." GJA's programs have always included a deep commitment to healthy friendships and connections, with ample support to help students address stresses that could get in the way of their learning and thriving. The school partners with NYU to provide social work and counseling support to any student who needs it, and engages every boy in small group 'talk time' to model healthy connections.

### **Arts**

GJA's arts program demonstrates the school's deep belief that artists make creative leaders and insightful scholars; that images express what words cannot; that artistic learning builds young brains. All GJA students receive training in band, dance and studio art, and as noted above, have opportunities to connect with some of NYC's outstanding arts resources.

### **Opportunities**

This is a period of transition for the school. Eighteen months ago, the Board engaged in a strategic review that has positioned the school well for moving forward, along with reinvigorating the Board, increasing faculty salaries, and providing for the significant renovation of the school building. As noted, the school started in Grade 5 beginning this fall, and with the 2020-2021 school year, it will focus on being a traditional middle school serving Grades 6 through 8. The school has an endowment of approximately \$3M and its next year's operating budget will be \$2.7M. While each boy's family pays some tuition, virtually all of the budget is raised through individuals and foundations. The 2019-2020 school year will see a new administrative structure and a smaller faculty as the school adjusts to its new formation. There are 14 faculty and staff in addition to a Head of School and Directors of Curriculum, Development, Admissions, and Placement.

A new Head of School will have the opportunity to partner with a strong, committed Board in fulfilling the vision of the strategic review, advancing the school to a firmer place of strength and sustainability. The opportunity to serve as the Head of GJA enables a school leader to be fully immersed in both the internal and external aspects of school business—and the right leader for

GJA will find that truly compelling. A Head can know each student, connect with every faculty member, spend time in classrooms and be an active, enthusiastic ambassador with supporters and foundation representatives.

As GJA transitions to a traditional middle school serving boys in Grades 6 through 8, the time the school has to well-prepare students for the challenges of rigorous high school programs will be condensed. Faculty note this challenge, and a new Head will need to work with the Director of Curriculum and faculty in reviewing the curriculum to define top priorities to support the boys in the goal of each being his best and having the social, emotional and academic tools to be successful in his next steps forward.

GJA's mission is incredibly compelling. While the school is very fortunate to have many strong individual and foundations as supporters, raising 90% of the budget each year requires a Head of School who understands the importance of telling the stories and connecting people with the work of GJA. Working to achieve long-term financial sustainability will require the building on an endowment and continuing to widen the circle of individual supporters.

As noted, GJA has been highlighted as a model program in national press. A Head of School who recognizes and utilizes the opportunities to share GJA's successful support of young men from at-risk backgrounds with other educational institutions will increase opportunities to change the trajectory of more lives.

### **The Position**

George Jackson Academy's Head of School will be an enthusiastic, experienced educator whose heart beats faster reviewing this document, absorbing the mission, and considering the challenges ahead. He or she will be an individual who ideally possesses experience working in an urban setting with a diverse population, bringing a deep understanding of the many challenges faced by the boys and their families. He or she has the character, experience, and leadership skills to:

- Be an active, visible, impactful, and joyful leader in a school that serves boys Grades 6-8
- Coalesce the school community to move forward together through accessible, engaged leadership, and open communication, building a culture of collaboration and teamwork
- Build faculty morale through thoughtful support, visibility, mentoring, strong communication, and the authentic valuing of faculty voice
- Offer support and guidance to the Director of Curriculum as the school continues efforts to ensure clarity of scope and sequence in its academic program
- Be a goal-oriented strategic and visionary leader, working to secure GJA's financial foundation and sustainability
- Be a compelling, active ambassador on behalf of the school and its mission
- Serve as a strong role model for GJA boys.

The opportunity to lead George Jackson Academy is an opportunity to join a unique school that is part of a very special community that lives and breathes diversity, equity, social justice, and the

whole education of boys. The ideal candidate will be an experienced school leader who can embrace the school's mission and focus on the achievement of the above opportunities.

**For Consideration**

Please send electronically: Resume, Letter of Interest and Personal Statement and/or a Statement of Educational Philosophy to:

Jane Armstrong or Bill Lyons, Managing Partners

***Independent Thinking***

[search@independent-thinking.com](mailto:search@independent-thinking.com)

617-332-3131

*All inquiries will be treated confidentially and review of candidate files will begin immediately.*

*George Jackson Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic or national origin and is an equal opportunity employer.*