An Invitation to Apply for

Head of School
Chewonki Foundation
Wiscasset, Maine

Posted September 1, 2010
Applications due October 20, 2010

Mission Statement

The Chewonki Foundation is dedicated to helping people grow individually and in community with others by providing educational experiences that foster an understanding, appreciation & stewardship of the natural world and that emphasize the power of focused, collective effort.

At Chewonki Semester School we choose to approach our rigorous academics, physical work, and everyday living with responsibility and joy. Whether engaging in a spirited classroom discussion, harvesting tomatoes for our table, or planning Saturday night's event, we live each day deliberately with an eye toward connecting the individual to a larger community. Students leave Chewonki with a strengthened ownership for their education, an awareness of their place in nature, and an understanding that they can make a positive difference in their world.

The Search

The Chewonki Foundation, a dynamic, multi-faceted educational and environmental community, seeks a new Head of School, the third in its history.

Started in 1988, Chewonki has had forty-four semesters totaling over 1,600 students from over 270 sending schools. In 2004, the founding head returned to full-time teaching and a second head served until July 2010, when he was appointed president of Chewonki. An interim head, from the faculty, will lead the school during the 2010-2011 academic year. The new head will move to campus and begin work between July 1 and August 1, 2011.

Chewonki is a year round institution that, in addition to the semester, includes overnight camps for boys, girls, and families; wilderness trips for teens and adults; an environmental education center offering residential outdoor classroom programs for school groups, traveling natural history programs, and web-based educational programs for all ages; and a sustainability initiative nationally recognized for its innovative energy projects. All programs share land, facilities, and staff in a collaborative and efficient use of resources that ideally leads to a synergy of effort in line with the mission.

For this position Chewonki seeks an experienced teacher and school leader with the vision to guide a faculty and program through innovations that honor the values of tradition. The new head should enjoy the full-time demands of boarding school and be comfortable with an expeditionary mindset. He or she should be equally at home in a classroom, on the farm, camping in the woods, messing about in boats, leading a new class schedule initiative, cleaning a bathroom, managing a budget, and advising a student.

The new head must have a passion for the natural world and for educating young people in a setting that emphasizes experience and responsibility while fostering individual growth and development.

The new head will inherit a strong, accredited school with talented colleagues and momentum for evolutionary change. Chewonki has just completed a transition of leadership to its fourth President after ninety-five years as well as a successful capital campaign. Application numbers and enrollment have been strong and faculty retention is high.

A search committee of Chewonki faculty and staff, under the direction of the Chewonki president, will recruit and select the new head. Persons wishing to apply for, nominate, or inquire about this position should contact Nancy Percy as directed at the end of this statement.

Background

Clarence Allen, an energetic schoolmaster, launched Split Rock Camp on the shores of Lake Champlain in upstate New York in 1915 and, in 1918, moved it to Chewonki Neck, a spectacular 400-acre peninsula in midcoast Maine. Chewonki remained a summer camp for boys until Allen retired in 1965. In 1962, a group of former campers and staff members purchased the camp and incorporated it as a non-profit educational organization.

Tim Ellis served as assistant director and director of the camp from 1965 to 1970 and then led the Foundation from 1970 to 1991 during the formative years when it created new, diversified programs and became a year-round operation. In the 1970's and 1980's, Chewonki expanded its property, developed camping-based environmental education programs, now known as the Outdoor Classroom, set up "traveling" natural science units for Maine schools that brought live birds and animals to classrooms, sponsored extensive wilderness tripping adventures for young people and adults, and created several year-round residential programs for high school and post high school students.

In 1988, Tim Ellis and Scott Andrews (founding head) established The Maine Coast Semester. In 1992, the sustainability office was opened. After seventeen years as director, Scott Andrews returned to full-time teaching in 2004. Willard Morgan became the second head of school for six years, before moving to President in 2010. In August 2009, the name was changed to Chewonki Semester School to represent the alignment of all Chewonki programs.

The name Chewonki likely derives from the Wabanaki name for goose "je-wonk" combined with "ki" for "shore," which was applied to the Chewonki peninsula long ago as thousands of migrating Canada geese rested in nearby salt marshes on their long journeys up and down the East Coast. Today the name symbolizes Chewonki's commitment to nature and the long history of its beautiful location.

As stewards of the campus, Chewonki has committed to becoming as self-sustaining as possible and to reaching an eighty percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. Students split and use firewood from our own woodlot to heat their cabins. Photovoltaic panels, biodiesel, renewable hydrogen, biomass, passive solar, hydro, geo-thermal, wind, and solar heat technologies are all part of the sustainability initiative as is the low impact lifestyle of the Chewonki community.

Location

Chewonki owns or manages over a dozen properties in Maine, totaling close to 1,500 acres. Four are deep in the Maine woods, strategically located near prime wilderness hiking and canoe trails. The campus of the girl's camp is one of these. The rest, which are used by several programs as camping locations, are scattered strategically along the rugged Maine coast and include eight islands. Central to all is the 400-acre campus in Wiscasset located on the Chewonki peninsula, bordered by a protected tidal inlet several miles upriver from

the mouths of the Kennebec and Sheepscot rivers. In nearly a century's time, the campus has grown to include more than fifty seasonal and year-round buildings, a variety of activity locations (tennis courts, waterfront, etc.), over five miles of maintained trails, three and a half miles of pristine coastline, and thirteen beautiful campsites. It is a place of serene, natural beauty. The core of the campus is used year-round and activities multiply each summer when the boy's and family camps are in operation. The semester shares the campus with other programs in spring and fall, although with little facility overlap. Of all the Chewonki programs, the semester serves the fewest number of students, but for the longest period of time.

Wiscasset, Maine (population roughly 3,500) is about fifty miles northeast of Portland. The village hosts a small airport and is the site of the decommissioned Maine Yankee nuclear power plant. Chewonki has played and is playing an active role in the decommissioning process, which includes removal of a dam on nearby Montsweag Brook. Faculty and students participate in the long-term scientific monitoring of this watershed restoration.

Bowdoin College is in nearby Brunswick, and Bates and Colby Colleges are a bit further away in Lewiston and Waterville. Darling Marine Center of the University of Maine and nationally renowned Bigelow Labs are a short distance away. An extraordinary variety of coastal and wilderness adventures are within easy reach.

The Program

Chewonki Semester School enrolls forty high school junior boys and girls each fall and spring semester (80 per year) who choose to leave their familiar homes, schools, friends, and family for an intense semester of living deliberately on the Maine coast. Students and faculty alike share the work and joy of forming a dynamic intellectual and sustainable community.

These students live and work on a 400-acre saltwater peninsula with the goal of exploring the interrelationship between people and the environment through courses in natural science, literature and writing, environmental issues, math, foreign languages, art, and history. The academic program is designed to support and enrich the junior year curriculum. The buildings are rustic, the atmosphere informal, and our community is small – only 40 students and 15 faculty members. Students and faculty jointly share responsibility for all aspects of the program. In addition to their studies, students maintain the facilities and a working organic farm and woodlot, among other responsibilities. They have ample opportunity for outdoor play, including wilderness trips and an ongoing outdoor program. The students who attend Chewonki are highly motivated and academically very capable. They grow to learn more about living and understanding other people, about the satisfaction that comes from hard work, and about the importance of stewardship of our world.

Students at Chewonki follow a college-preparatory curriculum, which allows them to participate in the program for one-half of their junior year without disruption to their academic plans. The academic program stresses cross-disciplinary learning and wherever possible, focuses on relationships between human beings and the natural world.

Position Objectives

The head position responsibilities lie between those of a typical division head or principal, those of a traditional head of school, and, to a lesser degree, those of an outdoor expedition leader. He or she must feel full responsibility for the students and faculty of the school, before, during and after each semester, although there is ample support from the president, especially in operations, advancement, and governance.

We seek a talented leader deeply experienced in environmental and experiential education, well suited to strategic thinking, comfortable in a small and intense environment, and committed to Chewonki's education and sustainability missions. We anticipate an advanced degree in an appropriate field, a successful career as a teacher, and school leadership experience, preferably in an independent school, although the search committee will consider exceptional candidates with alternative career paths and other academic credentials. Some experience successfully managing a leadership role within a larger organization is required. Recognizing that candidates are unlikely to have every preferred credential, experience, and skill, we seek candidates who bring all *or most* of the following professional experiences and personal qualities to the position.

1. **Artfully guide the semester community into and through the cycles of group formation and dissolution twice each year**. By design, Chewonki Semester School is a small group of students and teachers who take responsibility for co-creating the residential community, but who benefit from the "shepherding" of a thoughtful, beneficent leader. The head must proactively form and guide the school community, and then transition the student community to their post-semester lives in partnership with teachers and other Chewonki staff.
2. **Provide a practical and inspiring vision along with the strategic thinking needed to lead evolutionary change.** Our experienced faculty provides the capacity to pursue ideas that will help us better achieve our mission. A leader who can continuously recognize, relish, and articulate the value of our work will help inspire the best in teachers and students. We are interested in a head who can help articulate what Chewonki will look like in the year 2020 and what our students will need to be leaders in that world.
3. **Fully participate in and oversee student life.** As a residential faculty member, the head shares classes, chores, meals, work, and activities with students. Although teachers do not live in housing with students, the head is "on" and available throughout the time that students are on campus each semester. The head is ultimately responsible for the quality, safety, and success of the student experience. This oversight includes the advising and disciplinary systems.
4. **Provide collegial support and mentorship to a small, dedicated faculty.** The twelve full-time faculty, three teaching fellows, and numerous other staff with student interaction flourish under the leadership of a committed school leader who can inform, support, and inspire through authentic action. The head should be accessible and also proactive about observing classes, sharing ideas, and conducting regular reviews of faculty members. When positions are available, the head is responsible for the hiring of dynamic educators.
5. **Teach students each semester in an area of expertise.** In our small school, the academic component is central to the experience. We strive to cultivate an "intellectual spirit" in each student who joins us. The head should find tremendous joy in challenging students with a pedagogy that embraces the best of traditional, progressive, and experiential approaches.
6. **Connect with parents, alumni, and educators at sending schools.** The extended semester community must be knit together by the head. Although teachers communicate with parents as student advisors and the admissions office manages most sending school relations, it is the head who must provide the full vision, scope, and continuity to the semester network. This work happens year-round, including winter and summer, and it includes alumni relations and fundraising. The head should also envision new ways for Chewonki to provide ongoing education to alumni, families, and educators beyond our program and campus. This work requires travel away from campus periodically throughout the year.

The Chewonki Foundation is an equal opportunity employer.
Candidates from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

7. **Oversee daily operations and long-term planning for program support**. We like to say that all Chewonki students and teachers "own" the campus while they are here. Considering this sense of responsibility and talented support staff on campus (farm, kitchen, facilities, administrative), the head can trust in daily operations, but must understand the interworking of the Chewonki community. The head must coordinate use and resources with the other Chewonki programs throughout the year and manage a budget. Furthermore, the head must work closely with the health care team to ensure appropriate care and support of students.
8. **Collaborate with other Chewonki senior staff and the Chewonki Semester School Advisory Committee**. The head of school reports to the Chewonki president along with other program and resource area leaders who together constitute the leadership team. In addition, the head has the opportunity to work with an energetic and supportive advisory committee composed of educators, alumni, Chewonki advisors, and Chewonki trustees.

Opportunities and Challenges

1. **Curriculum**: We look forward to the new head of school joining the faculty in an ongoing discussion about the curriculum. Questions include: Should we require every student to do an independent research project? Is our approach to standardized testing appropriate to our program and our students? Should our 'core' curriculum (required of all students) continue to be Natural History and one of the two English classes? Are there ways to make our pedagogy more progressive, better serve today's 11th graders, and still meet the needs and wishes of sending schools and parents? Furthermore, are there other content areas that could help us meet our mission while attracting a diverse group of students with leadership potential?

2. **Diversity planning**: The head of school will have the opportunity to lead the faculty through a process of evaluating the diversity of the school community, particularly in terms of how we recruit and support students and faculty of color, male students, and students from varying socio-economic backgrounds. Maine independent schools have historically struggled to attract students and faculty of color, and racial and ethnic minorities have always been underrepresented at Chewonki.

   In addition, Chewonki Semester School faces a significant gender disparity, both in the number of applicants (in a typical semester, the gender ratio is two or three girls for every boy) as well as in the success of students during their semester (girls generally outperform boys academically, are involved in fewer disciplinary incidents, and take on more leadership roles).

   Finally, Chewonki continues to confront issues surrounding socio-economic diversity within our student body. In line with national trends in independent school admissions, Chewonki has increased its financial aid budget significantly in recent years in response to the growing need in our applicant pool, while continuing to enroll a majority (65%) of full-paying students.

   The faculty is excited to begin a new stage of addressing these three areas of focus through review of curriculum, recruitment strategies, residential life, and personal and group evaluation under the leadership of the head of school.

3. **Sustainability:** In 2008 the Chewonki Foundation Board of Trustees ratified a pledge that Chewonki reduce its CO2 emissions 80% by the year 2050. Chewonki also recently joined the

Green Schools Alliance, establishing itself as the second school in the state of Maine to make a good faith pledge to reduce emissions.

During the last four years, Chewonki has emitted an average of 400 metric tons of equivalent CO2. The largest gain in reducing carbon emissions has come from a decision to purchase "green" electricity in 2009, which reduced our carbon footprint by 15%. Those gains have been partially offset by a significant increase in gasoline consumption (up 32%) by commuter and program travel.

As part of its sustainability efforts, Chewonki also strives to develop a sustainable food system by focusing on its own farm, local farms, and by making responsible food choices. Chewonki's approach to food systems and the goal of reducing 80% by 2050 will require significant efforts and creative solutions in the immediate and distant futures.

The Candidate

A successful candidate will likely have both a breadth and depth of experience in line with the Chewonki mission. The small, intense educational community demands certain personal qualities to foster the personal and transformative nature of the program.

Professional experience

Although the head will likely have significant school experience, a demonstrated commitment to the transformative education of teenagers is the most important professional attribute we seek. A diverse collection of professional experiences may be helpful in this multifaceted leadership role.

1. **Educational leadership experience.** Time spent as a department head, dean, division head or similar position will provide experience with the communication, decision-making, and problem solving needed for this role.
2. **Extensive experience teaching in a classroom setting.** Every adult on campus is a teacher and we expect the head to be a teacher while at Chewonki as well. A background with traditional classroom teaching in a college preparatory setting will prepare the head to support students and teachers in the sending school partnerships and college application process.
3. **Experience leading or teaching in a non-traditional setting - wilderness, abroad, or other experiential setting.** At Chewonki we strive to balance the best of traditional classroom instruction with the best of outdoor and experiential education. Experience with and deep appreciation for the power of the latter is essential to leading the semester.
4. **Demonstrated ability to connect across constituencies.** Experience with and beyond the student-parent-teacher relationship will prepare the head for the many constituencies connected to this position.
5. **"Other experience" relevant to the Chewonki lifestyle.** Faculty and staff at Chewonki tend to have a variety of experiences and skill sets that enrich programs and the work place. Candidates should share all relevant experience as part of the application process.

Personal qualities

1. **Good communicator**. The head must be open and honest in communication with students, teachers, staff, parents, alumni, sending school administrators, and other professional colleagues. He or she should be comfortable speaking one-on-one and in front of large groups, as well as with written correspondence in all media.

2. **Team player**. Each Chewonki employee is part of the team, even if leaders have certain extra responsibilities as part of their role. Candidates should enjoy the feeling of collaboration and be accessible to all constituents.
3. **Leads an active life of the mind.** Most faculty members have advanced degrees and they thrive on continuous intellectual growth. Curiosity, voracious reading, and frequent sharing of articles, ideas, and opinions feed the intellectual spirit of the program.
4. **Belief that human connection between individuals is a pathway for improving the world.** Although natural science and environmental issues are foci of the semester, the semester places even greater emphasis on learning how to live and work in a functioning human community.
5. **Practice in or appreciation for arts, drama, and/or music.** Summer counselors and semester teachers have always integrated art, drama, and music into the Chewonki experience. Support and participation from the head will further build the community.
6. **An optimism that teachers and experiences can shape children in positive ways.** Despite the challenges of our age, we believe wholeheartedly that good education opens doors to a fulfilling life.
7. **Personal commitment to the belief that diversity strengthens all systems.** Chewonki anticipates demographic and curricular changes in the coming decades. The new head will help chart that course based upon experience and an eye to the future.
8. **Personal interests/passions outside of work that trickle into professional life.** As with arts, drama and music, we hope that each person shares personal interests as part of our living and learning together.
9. **Wilderness travel experience.** The self-sufficiency, tolerance for adversity, flexibility, and appreciation of nature gained through backcountry travel predispose candidates for success at Chewonki.
10. **Integrity and standard of excellence.** It should go without saying that the new head will be expected to perform at a high standard and with complete integrity in all areas of activity. There cannot be even the impression of conflicts of interest, favoritism, or self-serving or unethical behavior.
11. **Environmental commitment.** To live the Chewonki mission, the head must have a personal commitment to an environmental ethic with a recognition that we live in a world with limits.

Contact, Salary, and Search Schedule

The search is currently scheduled to conclude in December of 2010 with a starting date between July 1 and August 1, 2011. After the application deadline there will be initial evaluations of written materials followed by interviews and extensive background checks. Salary will be competitive with a division head position at small New England independent schools and will depend upon qualifications and experience.

Interested candidates should submit a resume (electronic submission preferred), in confidence, with a cover letter and 500-word statement of educational philosophy to: hr@chewonki.org or Nancy Percy; Chewonki Foundation; 485 Chewonki Neck Road; Wiscasset, ME; 04578. Applications are due at Chewonki before or on October 20, 2010.

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For additional information, please see www.chewonki.org.

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