



---

**SAN LUIS OBISPO**

CLASSICAL  
ACADEMY

---



HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL (9TH-12TH)

# Greetings!

We are honored that you want to learn more about us. We, like you, desire to find the right “fit” for this position—both for the person hired and for our vibrant community here at San Luis Obispo Classical Academy (a.k.a. SLO Classical Academy, SLOCA). Our hope for all our staff is that they will not just meet the challenge but will flourish in their role of navigating the many joys and demands of “educating for life.” They will do so with both excellence and creativity.

Located in stunning San Luis Obispo on California’s Central Coast, SLO Classical Academy equips children for a life well-lived and well-spent. **Our mission is to be a community that forges character, fosters wisdom, and nurtures a lifelong passion for learning.** This mission has served as our guide since our inception in 2005. We aim to provide deep, life-changing, non-sectarian classical education—with a SLOCA twist!—to all families desiring a rich learning experience for their children. In this, students are, of course, our ultimate focus; but, we are also passionate about serving their families as we call them to actively engage and participate in the educational process.

C.S. Lewis says that “the task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts.” At SLO Classical Academy, we are in the business of irrigating deserts. And this vision of education is less about firehosing students with facts and more about sustainably and patiently digging up wells within students to awaken their own curiosity and excitement for learning. We take this task of joyful and playful education seriously, and we’re looking to expand our team to others who want to join us in this vision.

We encourage you to carefully read through this opportunity profile and our website, [sloclassical.org](http://sloclassical.org), and to browse through our accompanying blog to learn more about us. If you’re inspired to apply for this position, follow the directions at the end of this document to begin the application process. You may contact our Director of HR at [jobs@sloclassical.org](mailto:jobs@sloclassical.org) to answer any application questions.

Best regards,

**Susie Theule + Terri Kahn**  
**Founder and Head of School + Director of HR**

# Our History

San Luis Obispo Classical Academy began as a dream in 2005. We had a vision for our own children that quickly turned into a dream for the entire community—to offer a meaningful, engaging education that:

- **values parents and family life**
- **was founded on the best classical education ideas**
- **helped students thrive**

We began by painting garages and converting dining rooms in four homes that served 27 students from kindergarten through 6th grade. It quickly became apparent that all sorts of families desired the same things we did. We have grown over these past 21 years to serve over 400 students, K-12th grade. We have also added an innovative preschool and an infant/toddler care program. We take great pride in what we offer—each child is served with a thoughtful, carefully planned educational experience that is nothing short of life-changing. Our desire is ultimately to share it with the world.



# SLO Classical Academy Values

These represent our “**Core Values**”, the behaviors and attitudes that are inherent to the people who best fit and thrive in this unique community.



**ALL IN:** SLOCA stakeholders who best fit and thrive in our community recognize we are up to big things; they believe wholeheartedly in our reason for existing and are committed to it over the long-haul. They are thus loyal to SLOCA: they give of themselves for the mission; they intentionally value what we value; they are excited to share about the school.



**ALWAYS MINDFUL:** Focused and thoughtful. SLOCA stakeholders who best fit and thrive in our community are continuously thoughtful and potently focused in all things SLOCA-related—e.g. in pursuing our mission/vision, in what curricula we choose, how we treat others, what decisions we make, how we spend students’ time, what strategies we use, etc.—and the effects are experienced by other stakeholders.



**ALWAYS LEARNING:** Individually and corporately. SLOCA is, if nothing else, a learning community focused on educating for life. The stakeholders who best fit and thrive at SLOCA are committed to lifelong learning; are humble in recognizing the need for development and growth; embrace mistakes as learning opportunities; and recognize that all good learning takes hard work and dedication. They expect and value coaching, are willing to both receive and give it when asked, and are comfortable with that cultural value.



**ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL:** We see all SLOCA stakeholders as one TEAM. The people who best fit and thrive at SLOCA truly value teamwork: they believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; they value all types of people and positions; they recognize their own part on the team and act accordingly; they assume the best of others and act in a way that builds, rather than destroys, team unity and trust.



**IN-JOY:** The people who best fit and thrive at SLOCA are serious about joy. Joy is the sign of a person attentive to and in love with the true, the good, and the beautiful, and of a community that is glad to be with each other. Joy doesn’t come easy, and so we work at it. In the midst of hardships and challenges that try our patience and peace, we try to remain ourselves and return to joy, striving for the playful, festive, and offbeat vibe that is our norm.



**ON-TOP-OF-IT:** SLOCA strives to be on top of its game in terms of all it does. Those who best fit and thrive at SLOCA seek excellence in all we do - e.g. strive to be organized, efficient, knowledgeable, prepared, follow through, meet deadlines, learn new things, etc.



**EVER-IMAGINING:** SLOCA was built on and is fueled by imagination. Where others see problems, we see opportunities, whether creating new programs, solving problems, making our space functional and beautiful, or throwing a staff party. Those who fit and thrive at SLOCA value imagination and all it brings to the table. They can embrace the discomfort living outside the box might occasionally bring, and aren’t afraid to take the bull by the horns.

# Head of Upper School (9th-12th)

*“The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts.”*

– C.S. LEWIS

At SLO Classical Academy, we are in the business of irrigating deserts. And this vision of education is less about firehosing students with facts and more about sustainably and patiently digging up wells within students to awaken their own curiosity and excitement for learning. We take this task of joyful and playful education seriously, and we’re looking to expand our team to others who want to join us in this vision.

## **JOB SUMMARY + STRUCTURE**

As part of the executive leadership at SLO Classical Academy, the Head of Upper School (9th-12th grade) is responsible for ensuring that the high school delivers on its mission, promises, and initiatives by casting vision, developing the HS team, serving the students and their families, and building the culture.

- Exempt, full-time employee status, year-round
- Benefits and PTO (5 weeks)
- Reports to the Founder + Head of School
- Oversees the Upper School (US) teachers, Student Life Director, US Office Manager
- Serves on the Executive Leadership Team, EduLeads Team, Disciplinary Team, Retention Team, and additional teams as needed

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

### ***Education + Experience:***

- Advanced degree in a field related to the position
- Evidence of ongoing professional development as related to the position
- 8+ years of educational/teaching experience
- 5+ years of experience in classical education
- 5+ years in educational leadership
- Experience with divergent learning highly desired
- Experience supervising and mentoring direct reports
- Experience guiding the professional learning and development of educators

### ***Core Competencies:***

- Willing to learn about and support the mission of SLO Classical Academy (to be a community that forges character, fosters wisdom, and nurtures a lifelong passion for learning!)
- Passionate about classical education
- Demonstrated experience tackling challenges creatively while maintaining grounding in classical practices
- Able to work under others but to take ownership of areas of responsibility
- Highly relational with a strong emotional and organizational IQ
- Proven experience moving team members towards personal and organizational objectives

- Proven ability to effectively work with students and parents
- Able to balance relational strength with results and performance goals
- Ability to galvanize a team and lead them to project completion on time, on budget
- Clear, concise communicator
- Never satisfied with the status quo—always seeking new ways to improve our product, delivery, relevancy, and value
- No reservations about tackling the unknown
- Support and uphold the school’s unique makeup as non-sectarian and accessible to families from various backgrounds and beliefs

## **DUTIES + RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***Program – Vision, Implementation, + Growth:***

- Serve on the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to develop Upper School goals aligned with the organization’s big-picture vision. Share in the management and direction of the school: strategy, planning, and financial stewardship.
- Develop, implement, and share the vision for our classical school and all we have created around it, as it relates to Upper School students and the greater community.
- Utilize both foundational and creative means to deepen and expand our program.
- Take advantage of classical and other resources to grow professionally and to disseminate that knowledge and wisdom to the US team.
- Oversee curriculum development, electives, and immersives.
- Work with the ELT to facilitate and grow enrollment.
- Partner with Admissions for community and potential family outreach and follow-up, recruitment, and retention, specifically with new US students as well as Middle School students at SLOCA.
- Work with US staff and the retention team to support student retention, including individual outreach and family meetings.
- Build effective and efficient systems for the Upper School.
- Oversee relevant areas of accreditation as related to the Upper School.

### ***People – Staff Development + Growth:***

- Serve on the EduLeads Team, strategizing professional development across all levels.
- Provide clear, consistent expectations for SLOCA US teachers/community members, along with regular input, praise, and constructive feedback to help teachers grow as people and classical educators.
- Ensure SLOCA’s preferred pedagogy and approach is successfully adopted by all Upper School educators through training, consistent evaluations, and observations.
- Grow the advisory program, or something similar, to provide student support.
- Lead US Team Meetings to provide support and structure for the various tasks, events, and support the team is responsible for.
- Grow leadership pipeline alongside the Executive Team.

### ***Collaborating with Families for Student Success:***

- Build effective relationships with students and parents.
- Attend US retreat and student events.
- Meet with students and families as needed / provide support for challenging situations.
- Receive and respond to feedback from students and families.
- Develop an effective system for ongoing feedback from students and families.

**Oversee + Support Administration:**

- Oversee the hiring and dismissal of US teachers and staff.
- Manage the US program budget within SLOCA's budgetary processes and guidelines.
- Ensure US campus facility needs are met (i.e., safety, campus maintenance, and classroom needs).

**Embracing SLOCA'S Mission + Professional Growth:**

- Attend various school events, staff trainings, and team meetings.
- Read weekly staff and school email updates.
- Engage in professional development opportunities (Summer Reads, Beyond Great Books program, etc.).
- Adhere to all administrative directives and applicable SLOCA Policies, including those expressly outlined in the Teacher Field Guide and Employee Manual.

**Physical Demands\*:**

- Able to lift a minimum of 25 pounds on an occasional basis. Able to stand and move around for extended periods of time.

*\*The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.*

**SALARY RANGE**

\$90,000 - \$125,000 per year

# Location

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA

- Downtown SLO is a humming, pedestrian-friendly zone of shops, restaurants, and galleries in turn-of-the-20th-century buildings.
- Thursday Night Farmers' Market brings a fiesta of produce, crafts, barbecue, street food, and live entertainment to downtown.
- There are more than 1,200 nonprofits in San Luis Obispo, 128 of which are arts organizations.
- San Luis Obispo wine country lies five minutes south of downtown, putting two dozen premier wineries within easy reach.
- There are more than 25 miles of easily accessible trails in the city of San Luis Obispo.
- Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, the fifth of California's 21 Spanish missions, was founded in 1772.
- San Luis Obispo County has more than 80 miles of Pacific coastline.
- Hearst Castle, William Randolph Hearst's elaborate Central Coast summer home, stands in solitary splendor 45 minutes to the north.
- In a typical year, San Luis Obispo sees 315 sunny days.
- Fourth-lowest commute time in the state.
- Listed as one of the **top 10 places to retire in the US.**



PHOTO CREDIT: VISIT SLO

*“Workers in San Luis Obispo have high levels of workplace well-being. Number one in the nation. That’s really a nice achievement and something to celebrate.”*

**—Dan Witters,  
Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index**

*“Looking for a smile? Spend some time in San Luis Obispo — long celebrated as one of the “Happiest Places in America.” This is the spirited soul of The Land of SLO CAL, its warm Mediterranean climate and friendly folks welcome you. With thousands of acres of protected open space. Countless hikes with stunning 360° views. And a walkable downtown filled with historic architecture, the beautifully restored Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, and quaint, comfortable hotels in turn-of-the-century buildings.”*

**—SLOCAL.com**

*“San Luis Obispo serves as the commercial, governmental and cultural hub of California’s Central Coast. People are drawn to SLO for many reasons –high quality of life, arts and culture, education, proximity to the beach and mountains.”*

**—SLO Chamber**

# Why Work at SLOCA?

Working at SLOCA is more than clocking in and out of a job. As a place of learning, we encourage our staff towards nurturing the life of the mind. Through regular training, growth plan meetings, and programs like our Great Books reading challenge, SLOCA leadership prioritizes the investment in and growth of all staff members, educators and operational staff alike. As all give themselves to this meaningful task of educating for life, we're regularly reminded that we're a part of something much bigger than ourselves.



SLOCA STAFF



## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS + PERKS

- 401(k) + 401(k) matching
- Employee assistance program
- Tuition discount
- Flexible spending account
- Opportunities to grow professionally and personally
- Health, dental, vision + life insurance
- Paid time off
- Wellness Initiative Program\*

*\*SLOCA offers a robust Wellness Initiative Program to support a number of areas of wellness, including commuter stipends, monthly breakfast or treats, and gym membership discounts!*

## AWARDS, ACCREDITATIONS + MEMBERSHIPS



Member School  
2023-24



# Application + Candidacy Process

If—after reading through our materials and carefully considering your qualifications and excitement for both the position and our community—you believe you are a good fit, we invite you to initiate the inquiry process.

**To apply**, please visit our jobs page (see button below) and follow the instructions under the “ready to apply?” section.

**Please include responses to the following questions in the body of your email:**

1. After considering our community and position, please share why you are interested in this position, and how your life and career have qualified you for this position.
2. Please share your experience in, and relationship with, Classical Education.
3. Please briefly share your general leadership approach, style, and ideals. What do you believe are the important qualities of a leader?

**apply now**

You may contact our Director of HR at [jobs@sloclassical.org](mailto:jobs@sloclassical.org) if you have questions at any stage in the process.

Should our hiring team be interested in moving forward, the remainder of the application process involves three rounds of interviews with our Executive Leadership Team, other Directors, and then HS Staff.

---

**sloclassical.org**