

# Oakland's Head-Royce celebrates 125 years of excellence

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OAKLAND — When she opened the Anna Head School for Girls in Berkeley 125 years ago, the innovative educator might not have envisioned that in 2012, Head-Royce School would have 875 students, girls and boys, and a full K-12 curriculum.

“I think if Anna Head could see the teaching and the diversity of the students today, she’d be very proud,” said Robert Lake, who has been Head of School at Head-Royce on Lincoln Avenue in Oakland for the past three years.

“I find that Head-Royce has a wonderful balance between its sense of history and place and also not being stodgy or set in its ways,” said Lake, who lives in Oakland with his wife and two sons, both students at Head-Royce.

Lake said he feels a “real responsibility” to continue Anna Head’s vision and provide exceptional education to children of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

“Anna Head was committed to teaching the whole child, not just academics but art, music and sports,” Lake said. “She promoted the learning of languages and international affairs. That’s been part of the school’s DNA for many years.”

In fact, in 1897, Walter Magee, then director of physical culture at UC Berkeley, wrote:

“The young ladies of Miss Head’s School and the young ladies of the University of California participated in the first (basketball) match ever played between women anywhere ...”

Lake said the school today strives to maintain that forward thinking that Anna Head spearheaded.

“We can’t underestimate the courage and vision that it took for a woman to found a school for girls with the premise of providing excellent education,” Lake said. “It’s very inspiring to me.”

Anna Head was born in Massachusetts in 1857 to Elizabeth Head — who later ran a French and English School in Oakland — and Edward Head, a graduate of Harvard Law School.

The family moved to San Francisco in 1861 and later relocated to Oakland. Anna Head graduated from Oakland High School in 1874 and was one of 23 women in a class of 177 to graduate from UC Berkeley in 1879, with a degree in education administration.

The original Anna Head School was located in a large two-story house at 2538 Channing Way in Berkeley. Anna Head was just 31 years old when she opened it.

In 1892, the Berkeley Daily Herald wrote:

“Four years ago, Miss Anna Head opened in Berkeley a small school for girls ... to establish a school that would do away with the useless routine work that cumbers so much of the ordinary teaching and replace it with the best in the German and English systems ...”

Anna Head retired in 1909 and sold the school to Mary Wilson, who had been a teacher there. After Wilson retired in 1938, the Hyde family and subsequently the Dewey family owned the school.

In 1955, the University of California informed the Deweys that it needed the school’s land for its own expansion and proceeded to acquire the property through eminent domain.

The Deweys could not afford to relocate so they donated the school to the newly formed Anna Head School Inc. and appointed a board of trustees to run it. The board searched for a new site for the school and finally chose the current 14-acre location on Lincoln Avenue. Construction began, and by 1964, was complete.

In 1971, the school board established a boys' school that was named the Royce School in honor of Anna Head's brother-in-law Josiah Royce, a Harvard professor and philosopher. It was located just across the street from Anna Head School, in what is now Lincoln Child Center. By 1979, the schools were merged into one coeducational unit called Head-Royce School.

In an interesting twist of fate, Lincoln Child Center, which is run by the Oakland Unified School District, is moving to West Oakland. Head-Royce is in the process of purchasing the eight-acre property where it once held classes as the Royce School for boys.

"There are members of the current school community who took classes there," Lake said. "This acquisition is exciting for the long-term stability and health of the school."

Lake said the school will develop the Lincoln Child Center site over a five-year period.

"One huge thing that we are committed to is improving traffic on Lincoln Avenue during drop-off and pickup times," Lake said. "We are optimistic that our expansion will have a positive outcome for the neighborhood, for the school and for the city of Oakland."

Lake said the board's purchase of the property will serve the school and its students well for the next 125 years.

"The hallmark of the school's leadership, including previous heads (of school) and boards, is to continually ask, 'What do students need now and what do students need in the future?'" Lake said.

FYI

The tuition for Head-Royce School is: \$23,420 for kindergarten to five; \$26,150 for grades six to eight; and \$33,525 for grades nine to 12. Head-Royce provides nearly \$4 million in financial assistance in the form of grants to more

than 200 students in grades kindergarten to 12 on the basis of need. An additional \$15,000 is set aside for work-study grants.

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