

Position Statement

Head of Lower School, The Lab School of Washington

Washington, DC

Our students - Curious. Intelligent. Empathetic. Bursting with potential. This is Lab.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Lab School of Washington is an innovative learning community fostering scholarship and creativity in students with language-based learning differences. In an environment of inquiry and hands-on exploration, Lab School students learn to advocate for themselves as they become engaged and compassionate members of a global society.

The Lab School values its progressive philosophy of education that for over 50 years has guided project based learning for students whose minds are nourished through a program that allows the extra time they need to acquire proficient reading and writing skills. Through exposure to the arts, immersion in historical time periods, and engagement in hands-on science labs, Lab students discover the joy of learning and have practice in problem solving at an early age. Diversity is celebrated and cultural competency is a primary goal.

Our strong sense of a community with a common purpose is fundamental to our daily success with our students. Strengthened by their passion and faith in the school's mission, our administrators are instrumental in building a community of professionals that are well prepared to take on the challenges of delivering a life changing education. Our administrators are encouraged to engage in professional development in leadership, innovation, and instruction. In turn, our teachers thrive in an environment that is fueled by optimism and professional support. Working alongside their leaders, they are encouraged to develop inspired curricula and effective methodologies. Their efforts are supported by professional development in a wide range of topics including reading, arts, learning differences, health and wellness, mindfulness, inclusivity and equity, and classroom management to name a few.

At Lab, the arts are not electives; students take one or two classes in the arts every day. Art has been found to be a pathway to deeper learning as it engages the child's procedural memory, strengthens attention and stamina, deepens perspective and empathy, and allows learning to truly "stick." Math, engineering, science, language arts, set design ... all academic subjects can be taught through the arts, which in turn helps students problem solve and think analytically — crucial life skills.

HISTORY

The Lab School of Washington was founded by Sally L. Smith in 1967 as a day school for The Kingsbury Center, a diagnostic and tutoring resource for children with learning disabilities. For 15 years, the school was located on Phelps Place, NW in Washington, DC. In August, 1982, The Lab School of Washington was incorporated as an independent non-profit educational institution with its own Board of Trustees. In 1983, the Trustees of The Lab School bought the former Florence Crittenden Home and 3.6 acres of property at 4759 Reservoir Road, NW, in Washington. The Lab School moved into its present home that fall with an enrollment of 123 students. In 2008, The Trustees acquired the long term lease on the former Hardy School at 1550 Foxhall Road, NW, which is currently the home of our elementary students and teachers.

LAB AT A GLANCE

FOUNDED: 1967 **LOCATION:** Palisades neighborhood of Washington, DC **ENROLLMENT:** 373 students (1-12), 155 in Lower School **FACULTY:** 111 school-wide, 81% with advanced degrees; 16 in Lower School **ACCREDITATION:** Middle School Association of Colleges and Schools (since 1990) **MEMBER:** National Association of Independent Schools, Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington, Association of Independent Maryland and DC Schools.

ABOUT the LOWER SCHOOL: STRENGTHS & UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

The Lower School comprises programs on two campuses:

On the Foxhall Campus, the Elementary program is generally the equivalent of grades 1 through 4. Although there are no designated “grades,” students are grouped by age and developmental needs. Students move through the curriculum at their own pace, developing their strengths, skills, and confidence as learners.

Reading and language arts are an intensive part of each day’s work. Art, music, drama, and dance are core components of Lab’s curriculum at every level. Math, science, physical education, and The Lab School’s signature Academic Clubs round out an Elementary education at Lab. Students manage a beautiful garden – studying, planting, and harvesting vegetables and herbs.

Geared toward children ages 10-12, the Intermediate program focuses on growth and transition. Although still “ungraded,” students move to The Lab School’s larger campus on Reservoir Road and their daily routine begins to assume a more traditional academic structure, as attention to executive functioning skills becomes a priority.

THE POSITION: HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL

The Head of Lower School will be responsible for all aspects of leadership of both the elementary and intermediate programs. This is a full-time, year-round administrative appointment, beginning July 1, 2021. The Lower School Head will be supported by an administrative team that includes Associate Heads, social workers, and administrative assistants.

Specific responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Being an active and effective member of the School's senior leadership team.
- Acting as the educational leader of the Lower School, responsible for its day-to-day operation.
- Supervising and mentoring the division's leadership team.
- Working in concert with the Associate Head of School and Head of School to hire and retain an expert faculty.
- Supporting and supervising the Lower School faculty and assessing staff performance.
- Overseeing the delivery of educational programs to students, which includes responsibility for the creation and evaluation of divisional and faculty/student schedules.
- Promoting and modeling Lab's community norms, its mission, philosophy, and beliefs.
- Overseeing the education of approximately 160 students with diagnosed learning differences from ages 6 to 12 in an ungraded program (equivalent to grades 1-6) across two campuses (approximately .5 miles apart).
- Supervising, coaching, and scheduling a staff of approximately 70 teachers, classroom assistants, and specialists (speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, reading tutors).
- Participating in admission events and decision-making processes regarding student enrollment and retention.
- Attending school events and being actively involved in all aspects of school life.
- Communicating in effective, efficient, timely, and meaningful ways with faculty, staff, students, and parents/guardians within the division.
- Maintaining a safe and secure working, learning, and teaching environment, while promoting a culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Lower School Head works in concert with two other division heads for grades 7-8 and 9-12 to develop continuity throughout the school with regard to mission, philosophy, and instruction.

The Lower School Head reports to the Head and Associate Head of School.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES FOR THE HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL

- Aligning the Elementary and Intermediate programs while highlighting the unique aspects of each.
- Enhancing the communication pathways between the two programs.
- Coordinating the practices and curricular areas of the two programs.
- Building, maintaining, and partnering with faculty and staff, parents, and other administrators
- Identifying leadership skills in faculty and staff and finding opportunities to hone and grow these skills.
- Seeking innovative opportunities to enrich the academic, social, and emotional development of students.
- Challenging students to explore all aspects of their learning to become confident self-advocates.

WHO SHOULD APPLY: PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS & QUALITIES

The ideal candidate will have:

- Master's degree in a relevant field of study
- Deep commitment and focus to the school's work around diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.
- Substantial leadership experience in a lower school setting and insightful understanding of the role of the teacher.
- Understanding and commitment to school's mission.
- Leadership experience working with students with language based learning differences (dyslexia, dysgraphia, auditory processing, ADHD).
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and a strong attention to detail.
- Deep appreciation and passion for the value of the arts.
- Enthusiastic support for initiatives, both at the division and school-wide level.
- Solid knowledge of reading and writing instruction for students with learning differences.
- Strength in organizational, interpersonal, and leadership skills.
- Expert understanding of child development and a genuine love of working with children.
- Proven success at working collaboratively in educational leadership.
- Strong understanding of instructional leadership combined with a deep optimism about young children.
- A generous spirit, positive attitude, and sense of humor.
- A collaborative and collegial leadership style that encourages faculty to take risks and explore passions.
- Confidence balanced by humility.
- Intellectual curiosity, and an analytical approach to problem solving.

The Lab School of Washington is an inclusive and welcoming school that celebrates diversity, including race, color, religion, national and ethnic origin, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, age or any other status protected by applicable law. We welcome candidates representing the diversity of today's global world.

The Lab School of Washington is committed to attracting and retaining outstanding employees through a compensation plan that compares favorably with those of peer schools. A full benefits package includes retirement and medical/dental coverage.

COMMUNITY NORMS

As members of The Lab School of Washington community:

- we treat each other with respect,
- we embrace personal differences,
- we are committed to learning, exploring, and growing,
- we collaborate and communicate effectively,
- we act with integrity,
- we recognize that we are representatives of The Lab School of Washington.

In addition, as faculty and staff members of The Lab School:

- we celebrate and are committed to Lab School's philosophy, mission, and beliefs and will advance this mission with enthusiasm,
- we perform our work with competency, dedication, and good judgment,
- we promote teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration,
- we follow safe and healthy work practices,
- we understand and maintain professional boundaries between us as members of the Lab staff, and parents and students,
- we are positive members of the community, and
- we embrace and celebrate the uniqueness and distinct differences that each member of our community brings to Lab.

BELIEFS

As members of The Lab School of Washington community, we believe that:

- all children can learn, and it is our responsibility to identify their unique gifts;
- we must provide a safe, secure, inclusive, and nurturing environment in which children can learn;
- kindness, compassion, and perseverance are essential to helping students be successful;
- there is power in positive reinforcement, and we should foster self-confidence in students;
- successes, grand or small, should be celebrated;
- each person must be respected and diversity is prized;
- students with learning differences need highly differentiated and structured experiences;
- organization and social skills are keys to academic success;
- the most effective education for children with learning differences combines multi-sensory instruction, experiential learning, and an arts-infused curriculum;
- the arts provide a valuable and effective vehicle for organizing the learning process for students with learning differences;
- a talented, enthusiastic, and creative staff is essential to the success of every student;
- innovative and non-traditional teaching methods as part of a rigorous instructional model are beneficial;
- all students should develop the ability to self-advocate by learning to identify their strengths, needs, and unique learning style.

OUR LOCATION, CAMPUS, AND FACILITIES

The Lab School of Washington is situated in the Palisades neighborhood of Washington, DC. Located minutes from historic Georgetown, the Potomac waterfront, and a short drive to the museums, monuments, and other local historic sites, The Lab School spans two campuses, just a half-mile apart from each other.

At The Lab School of Washington, students learn through experiential learning. This model is enriched when the learning is out in the world.

The Washington, DC area and its environs are prime locations for “place-based learning” — a method of instruction that engages students in learning by connecting them with their existing environment, the place and location in which they live or go to school.

Washington, DC has more than 70 official museums and art galleries, more than 175 embassies and cultural centers in addition to countless parks, theaters, places of worship, and not-for-profit organizations. And that doesn’t even include the surrounding areas brimming with learning opportunities like Baltimore, Maryland’s American Visionary Art Museum or Virginia’s Mt. Vernon.

Like the freedom Lab teachers are afforded to create their own curricula, they are also encouraged to implement place-based learning within their units of study. Examples of these rich learning experiences range from Intermediate Museum Club’s visits to various places of worship including a synagogue, church, mosque, and Buddhist and Hindu temples when learning about the world’s religions to the High School Physics’ trip to an amusement park to use video to measure, test, and calculate a rollercoaster ride’s “g force.”

THE SEARCH PROCESS & APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants should submit the following:

- A cover letter indicating the candidate’s particular interest in and qualifications for the position.
- A current résumé.
- A statement of educational philosophy and/or other supporting materials (e.g., articles or speeches).
- An application for employment
- The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three references. References should speak to the applicant’s ability to be an effective educator and administrator, to work successfully with children, and to work collaboratively and collegially with adults.
(We will obtain permission from the candidate before contacting references.)

Materials should be submitted to Diana Meltzer, Associate Head of School, at diana.meltzer@labschool.org.

After an initial review of applicants, the School will conduct interviews with selected candidates. Finalists will be invited for a more comprehensive series of interviews. Ideally, an appointment will be made in March.