

Position Statement

Head of Upper School, The Lab School of Washington

Washington, DC

Our students - [Curious. Intelligent. Empathic. Bursting with potential. This is Lab.](#)

"Having ADHD is awesome, actually. Everyone else is looking at the world through a tiny straw, but people like me who have ADHD see the whole picture." — Lab School Student

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, a hallmark of our school, for 55 years. Through a unique arts-centered approach, the Upper School offers engaging courses that build the academic skills needed for college and career success, while simultaneously promoting organization, study, and test-taking skills. The Lab School's program is guided by the principles put forth by John Dewey who promoted a progressive education based on a variety of authentic learning experiences that engage the natural curiosity of students. Students gain confidence and discover new ways to solve problems and express themselves, as they learn to think like artists and view the world in alternative ways.

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. They 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 literacy, arts, learning differences, health and wellness, mindfulness, inclusivity and equity, and classroom management to name a few. Students build on their strengths and passions, embrace leadership opportunities, and develop strategies to tackle what's challenging.

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 differences. 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 the property at 4759 Reservoir Road, NW, in Washington. Lab moved into its present home that fall with an enrollment of 123 students. Lab's first graduating class held its commencement in 1988. In 2007, The Trustees acquired the long-term lease on the former Hardy School at 1550 Foxhall Road, NW, which is currently the home of our Lower School. Kim Wargo became Lab's third Head of School in 2020. Lab launched its Global Division in 2021.

LAB AT A GLANCE

FOUNDED: 1967 **LOCATION:** Palisades neighborhood of Washington **ENROLLMENT:** 380 students (1-12), 125 in Upper School **STUDENT FACING FACULTY:** 146 school-wide, 36 in the Upper School; 77% school-wide with advanced degrees; 89% of the Upper School faculty have advanced degrees. **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, International Dyslexia Association, Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education.

ABOUT the UPPER SCHOOL: STRENGTHS & UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Lab Upper School students learn on a deeper, more mature level how to be problem solvers, collaborators, and creative thinkers. Immersed in rigorous academic classes and arts-centered learning, students use their own unique view of the world to arrive at creative solutions. Programs like our year-long, junior-year internship, global travel, student government, affinity groups, and clubs offer students scores of opportunities to explore their interests, embrace leadership options, take risks, and develop new areas of interest. And Upper School students begin exploring their passions early with a college counselor, which helps them get a head start on post-graduation plans. Classes range from 4 to 13 students. Extra-curricular options include a robust athletics program, a long-standing theatre community, and the opportunity to mentor younger students through Eye to Eye.



Students have access to the technology tools they need to become more effective, efficient, and independent learners.

THE POSITION: HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL

The Head of Upper School will be responsible for all aspects of leadership for grades 9-12. This is a full-time, year-round administrative appointment, beginning July 1, 2023. The Upper School Head will be supported by an administrative team that includes the Associate Head of Upper School, Upper School Dean of Student Life, College Advisor, Social Worker, and an administrative assistant.

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 Upper 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.
- Overseeing the education of up to 140 students with diagnosed learning differences in grades 9-12.
- Supervising, coaching, supporting, assessing, and scheduling a staff of approximately 35 teachers and collaborating with on-campus specialists (speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, reading tutors).
- 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.
- 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.
- Actively promoting, supporting, and enhancing a culture that values diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

The Upper School Head works in concert with three other division heads for grades 1-4, 5-8, and the Global Division to develop continuity throughout the school with regard to mission, philosophy, and instruction.

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

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES FOR THE HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL

- Building stronger retention between the Middle School and Upper School divisions.
- Contributing to a robust enrollment management plan to increase the size of the Upper School.

- Working in close partnership with the other division heads, the Athletic Director, the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, and the Director of Wellness and Social Emotional Learning to enhance the sense of community, school spirit, and pride in belonging to the Lab School for all students, families, faculty, and staff.
- 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, including robust exploration of experiential learning and the possibilities of using DC as an extension of the campus.

WHO SHOULD APPLY: PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS & QUALITIES

The ideal candidate will have many of the following attributes:

- Master's degree in a relevant field of study
- Deep commitment and focus to the school's work around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all.
- Leadership experience in an Upper School setting and insightful understanding of the role of the teacher.
- Understanding and commitment to the 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 adolescent 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 adolescents.
- A generous spirit, calm and positive attitude, and a 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 judgement,
- 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 SURROUNDINGS

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's American Visionary Art Museum or Virginia's Mount Vernon.



Like the freedom Lab teachers are afforded to create their own curricula, they are also encouraged to implement location-based learning within their units of study.

Examples of these rich learning experiences range from the Upper School Physics trip to an amusement park to use video to measure, test, and calculate a rollercoaster ride's “g force” to taking a walking tour of DC's U Street

Corridor to study its rich cultural history to spending the day on the Chesapeake Bay as part to examine water quality.

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 (completed on the school's website)
- 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 this [web address](#).

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 by mid-March.

While the search will be ongoing until the new Head of Upper School is appointed, priority consideration will be given to candidates who submit all materials by February 15, 2023.