



Position Statement

Head of School

Start Date: July 1, 2024

Highland School

Warrenton, Virginia



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OVERVIEW

Located halfway between Washington, D.C., and the beautiful Shenandoah National Park, Highland School boasts state-of-the-art facilities in the heart of Warrenton, Virginia. A thoroughly modern campus serves students and families from a broad geographic area. Surrounded by charm and rural warmth, the campus includes the renowned Michael A. Hughes Center for the Arts (home of the Piedmont Symphony Orchestra), the LEED-certified William A. Hazel Family Lower School, a brand new Outdoor Classroom, and recent upgrades to the libraries and media centers of the Upper and Middle Schools. Founded in 1928, Highland School is impressive by any standard. The campus is intentionally designed to enhance the pursuit of academics, athletics and fine and performing arts. The facilities are the perfect environment to support the school's mission: "to prepare students to thrive, lead and serve in a diverse and dynamic world."

Highland School has a history of long-serving and well-respected Heads as well as effective, wise governance. There is a tradition of academic excellence that is guided by a caring, compassionate faculty. The 500 students attending the school are immersed in a long-standing focus on the five C's - creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration and leadership, and character. Students know what is expected of them and they enjoy strong relationships with teachers that support their emotional and social growth. The word used to describe the Highland community is "welcoming" as students and teachers alike enjoy a vibrant learning environment that exudes warmth.

Since its founding, the school has prepared students for academic success. Students are challenged with a rigorous curriculum focused on preparing them for college and beyond. From pre-kindergarten through grade 12, the college preparatory education is individualized and student-centered. Highland's curriculum is cohesive,

expansive, and solidly skills based. Students who need more individualized attention find assistance in the Learning Center that is comprised of a staff of full-time educators who train, tutor, challenge, and advocate for students of all abilities. Academics do not stop at the classroom door. Real-life experiences through field trips, internships, K-12 robotics, and an extensive outdoor education curriculum add to the learning that takes place on campus.

Head of School Henry (Hank) Berg will retire at the end of the 2023-24 school year after a successful tenure of 19 years, and the school is poised to build upon the momentum that has been created under his leadership. Highland has always been a leading school in its region, and the board is eager to engage a new Head who will continue his legacy of innovation. Together with the faculty and administration, the board seeks a new Head of School committed to excellence, balance, wellness and community to lead Highland into its next 100 years.

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MISSION AND HISTORY

Highland School was founded by Dorothy Rust and Lavinia Hamilton. It started as the Warrenton Branch of the Calvert School with nine elementary school students and two teachers and has grown to 500 students across three divisions, a faculty of 70 and an administrative staff of 30. The school is committed to providing students with a rich and rigorous education in a supportive and caring environment.

Mission: Highland School prepares students to thrive, lead and serve in a diverse and dynamic world, developing essential skills and character by challenging them with a demanding academic and co-curricular program.

Philosophy: The philosophy is informed by the Mission and rooted in four core beliefs:

1. A well-rounded education delivered in a nurturing environment is the best preparation for college and life beyond.
2. The school strives to discover the promise and potential of each student.
3. The student-teacher relationship and community responsibility are at the center of the learning experience.
4. Character development is equal in importance to academic development.

Inclusivity Statement: Highland School is committed to a culture of inclusion that affirms the innate dignity and worth of every individual as an essential aspect of our educational mission. The most enduring learning takes place in an environment where every member of the community feels safe, respected, known, trusted and valued. We are deeply enriched by sharing different perspectives, traditions and backgrounds. It is by including everyone in conversations and all areas of school life that we fully prepare students for engaged citizenship and compassionate leadership.





PROGRAM

As a Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 independent school, Highland serves the academic needs of a wide range of ages and an even broader range of abilities. The students quickly discover there are no limits to what they can achieve. With a supportive and student-centered environment, the needs of all students are met.

The Early Childhood Program at Highland is built around a developmental curriculum that promotes creativity, exploration, decision making and choice. Each child, from the youngest two-year-old to those preparing for Kindergarten, is encouraged to express his or her individuality while learning to function as an effective member of his or her peer group. The Outdoor Classroom—built and newly renovated via philanthropy and foundation grants—supports numerous opportunities for the youngest Hawks to learn foundational academic concepts via play.

The Lower School is designed to nurture every child's innate curiosity and wonder. The program is filled with fun exploration, confidence-building public performance, leadership and character-building community service. The application of the 'Project Approach', experiential math, social studies, language arts, and science classes form the foundation of the curriculum. Learning support and speech and language therapy resources are available. The teachers at the Lower School apply the principles of the 'Responsive Classroom' to foster a positive and supportive learning environment. This nationally recognized approach emphasizes the students' social and emotional growth, in addition to academic growth, as being essential to a child's development.

In the Middle School, students are provided with an age-appropriate and varied program that challenges them academically, athletically, socially and artistically in a nurturing environment guided by the "Growth Mindset" philosophy. Students feel safe trying new roles as they mature beyond childhood. A flexible schedule offers

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teachers opportunities to continue with the 'Project Approach'. Regular assemblies, wellness, computer literacy, programming classes and overnight field studies projects are also part of the Middle School experience. Core academics – including world languages – are emphasized, as are visual and digital arts, theater and music. Competitive sports are available beginning in Grade 6.

In the Upper School, challenging college preparatory academics are combined with a robust fine and performing arts program and state championship-winning athletics teams to provide Highland students the “demanding academic and co-curricular program” promised in the Mission Statement. Advanced Placement and Honors courses in math,

sciences, English, world languages, history and the arts yield AP and National Merit awards to Highland students every year. Five Certificate programs (for distinction in addition to the diploma), competitive Robotics, literary pursuits and numerous faculty-sponsored clubs provide many paths to excellence and a supportive environment in which students may excel. Opportunities, and graduation requirements, for community service support the Mission promise of “developing essential skills and character.” The low student-teacher ratio ensures students receive the individual attention they need to develop independence and confidence. Highland graduates’ success at the most selective universities in the country and abroad proves the strength of the school’s program.

STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

Highland School works tirelessly to make sure that each student has every opportunity to find out what makes him or her unique. The school provides its students with the tools and opportunities they need to discover themselves as well as discover the world around them. To achieve this, the school strives to create an academically challenging yet supportive, engaging, and nurturing environment. The faculty works to help its students participate and excel in as many ways as possible. Some notable strengths of the school are:

- There are many traditions that are valued and celebrated by the school community.



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- The faculty is dedicated, committed and hard working and enjoys academic freedom and autonomy.
- The school has an intentional focus on character, leadership, and integrity.
- There is a strong environmental education program that includes off-campus field studies in all three divisions.
- The learning support program in each division meets the needs of a wide variety of learners.
- The athletic program allows students to learn and grow through self-motivation and teamwork.
- The feel of community permeates the campus and reflects the reputation of Highland as a “family school.”
- There is a strong interdependency among the faculty and staff.
- The Board of Trustees is a diverse group of current parents, alumni and alumni parents whose skill sets span the breadth of Highland’s most important needs. Proper governance and active support of the Head are this Board’s priorities.



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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The next Head of Highland School should be a relationship builder who is prepared to support an exceptional faculty and staff that are dedicated to the school's mission. The school will need to be led wisely and confidently into the future by embracing current challenges and taking advantage of new opportunities to secure its financial sustainability. In addition:

- There will be an opportunity for the next Head of School to promote a collaborative community that solidifies the mission and articulates the bold vision of the school. While progress has been made in this area, the faculty, staff and administration are eager to continue to move forward with precision and clarity of mission.
- The next Head of School should be a lively and engaged presence in the halls, classrooms, labs, studios, and playing fields of the school. The Head should prioritize connecting with all students, teachers in all three divisions, staff in all departments, alumni located throughout the country, and current and

former parents eager to engage in the vibrant Highland community. This quality of leadership is especially vital in the post pandemic years as the community yearns for the connectedness that distinguished Highland prior to the pandemic.

- The talented faculty and staff at Highland School are the lifeblood of the school. The next Head must focus on building and sustaining the compensation and culture needed to attract and retain exceptional personnel.
- To accomplish its next set of strategic priorities, Highland must cultivate

increased generosity from its community. In partnership with the Board, the next Head will need to lead efforts to increase annual giving, cultivate relationships with major donors and philanthropists throughout the community, and promote and complete the current \$12MM endowment campaign.

- Highland School enjoys and exudes a strong sense of community. The next Head of School will be expected to preserve this environment while continuing to strengthen connections and relationships. It will be important to maintain and promote an atmosphere of



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respect for and appreciation of all stakeholders while deepening the sense of belonging for all members of the community.

- The next Head of School will need to continue development of diversity, equity and inclusion. Highland is proud of the advances they have made, especially in the recruitment of a diverse student body in the upper school. Work remains to be done on the recruitment, support and retention of faculty and administrators of color.
- The next Head of School will have the opportunity to communicate a school-wide vision that incorporates the school's programs of experiential learning, personalized learning programs and field experiences. Coordinating these programs with the faculty and articulating them to the entire school community will assist the faculty in execution and strengthen the outcomes for students.



- Once the vision has been established, there will be an opportunity to sustain and appropriately grow a stable enrollment by articulating a coherent and compelling value proposition in an increasingly challenging PK-12 enrollment environment. The next Head will have the opportunity to lead a growth focused enrollment strategy.
- Not unlike other schools, the pandemic affected Highland School and strained the personal and professional resources of its faculty and staff. As a result, several staff members are wearing multiple hats to ensure that students receive the best learning experience possible. The next Head of School will need to be cognizant of this, manage it accordingly and engage faculty and administrators in community building.
- A new Head of School will have multiple opportunities to be the visionary of the school's future. Embracing loyal alumni, the deeply connected students, an engaged parent body, prominent community philanthropists, and a loyal and dedicated faculty will solidly position the school for opportunities for growth and continued future success.

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KEY QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate to be Head of School at Highland School will be a mission and values-driven leader who will embody and demonstrate most, if not all, of the following skills, qualities, characteristics, and experiences:

- Demonstrated success as a visionary and the ability to inspire others to follow;
- Ability to serve as a warm and visible presence who knows the names of colleagues, students and parents;
- A talent for identifying, selecting, and retaining outstanding diverse administrators, faculty and staff, as well as supervising and developing them and encouraging their professional growth;
- Superb oral and written communication skills with the ability to tailor communication style to various constituent groups;
- Inclusive leadership style that develops, delegates, and empowers a high performing administrative team;
- Financial acumen and demonstrated fundraising expertise;
- Adept at conflict resolution;
- Ability to listen actively with a collaborative nature;
- A strong manager who can hold people accountable and create an organizational design and systems that promote effective communication and organizational alignment;
- The ability to strike the right balance between a warm, compassionate and approachable demeanor, with clear, honest, firm and decisive judgments and actions without micromanaging;
- Advanced degree;
- Excited to enthusiastically embrace the Highland School family as well as the greater Warrenton community while enhancing the school's stature throughout the Piedmont region.



TO APPLY

Highland School retained the firm Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support its search for a new Head of School. If you wish to submit your application, please do so at: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>.

Applications include:

- Letter of interest (cover letter)
- Resume or CV
- A Personal, Leadership or Educational Philosophy Statement
- One additional writing sample of your choice
- Names of four current references and contact information (optional)

The deadline for receipt of full application materials is Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Please note that the Highland School Search Committee intends to interview semi-finalist candidates in-person the weekend of April 1, 2023. Finalists will be invited to campus in May 2023. Please plan accordingly.

For any questions or further information about the position, please contact either consultant:

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