

Indian Mountain School



Search for the Interim Head of School

We love IMS with our whole hearts. As both a residential boarding and day school, IMS is home to many of our students, faculty, staff and their families; and for all of us, IMS is our community. We hope to find in an interim head of school a person who will hold our community in firm but gentle hands, supporting our leadership transition with the kind of wisdom that comes from a blend of experience, curiosity, and purpose. We invite you to learn more about IMS, our mission, and our people—and to explore whether we may be mutually well suited to pursue this unique opportunity together.

- IMS Head of School Search Committee

THE SEARCH

Indian Mountain School (IMS) seeks an interim head of school to support the community's longstanding commitment to honesty, compassion, and respect in the pursuit of holistic educational excellence. As a pre-kindergarten through ninth-grade junior boarding school set on 600 scenic acres in Lakeville, Connecticut, IMS is known for nurturing and educating students from around the world who graduate and advance to secondary school prepared to lead with courage and purpose. The interim head of school will join the IMS community this summer and support the school through the 2024-2025 academic year until the transition to a permanent head of school.

The interim head will succeed Jody Reilly Soja, who, after 9 years of impactful service, departs IMS to lead The Loomis Chaffee School. Under Jody's leadership, IMS grew enrollment, strengthened its financial position, built new facilities and renovated existing buildings, completed two strategic planning processes, and made meaningful strides in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The interim head will support IMS through the transition to a new head of school by embracing the community with warmth and joy, furthering ongoing strategic objectives, and prioritizing stability and continuity across key measures.

IMS has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of its interim head of school. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT INDIAN MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

From its breathtaking 600-acre campus and the peak of its eponymous mountain, Indian Mountain School provides a dynamic, comprehensive education for a community of approximately 320 learners, more than 100 of whom are boarding students in grades five through nine from across the country and around the world. IMS's unique physical setting supports students' exploration of the natural world through an integrated outdoor adventure and education program. The pre-K through grade 9 curriculum is designed with the understanding that students have the power to effect change in their immediate surroundings and the broader world. By bringing real-world issues into play, students are inspired to think beyond themselves and grow into active and responsible participants in their own education and their community.

On the school's Upper Campus, students in fifth through ninth grades pursue a discovery-based curriculum rooted in academic exploration, service leadership, and outdoor learning. The diverse cohort of international boarding students Just around the corner, IMS nurtures young learners in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade on the Lower Campus, where each classroom opens directly to the outdoors. Together, the IMS campuses form a joyful community where students are engaged, challenged, encouraged to play, and develop meaningful relationships.

The student-to-teacher ratio at IMS is four to one, and the average class size is 12 students. Faculty are energetic, innovative, and deeply committed to fostering each child's inquisitiveness. Faculty serve as teachers, coaches, and advisors, coming to know the kids as scholars, athletes, performers, and leaders. In turn, the students also see their faculty-coaches as multi-dimensional and integral members of their community: more than two thirds of all faculty live in IMS housing, serve as dorm parents, raise their own families on campus, and/or send their children to IMS. Faculty and staff members' daily presence on campus provides a safe environment for students to engage in the kind of risk taking that enables young people to become critical thinkers and confident leaders, and to find joy in assuming responsibility for their environment, their community, and themselves.

Academically, IMS welcomes and supports a variety of learning styles. Through its Ascend program, the school supports students with dyslexia and other diagnosed language-based learning differences. With robust tutoring, English language learning, and other forms of academic support, IMS lifts up traditional and non-traditional learners.

Recent and ongoing major capital projects are concentrated on expanding community spaces, reflecting a central tenet of the IMS ethos: that our deepest learning occurs when we are together in community. The new Morehead Athletic Center opened in April 2023 and supports the School's competitive sports teams. Nestled at the base of the mountain, the Outdoor Working Lab (OWL) is a net-zero, environmentally-focused outdoor research classroom. With the intention to have its facilities reflect the talent of its students, IMS recently began the transformation of the former gymnasium into a new performing arts center to be completed in Fall 2024. On the heels of this effort, IMS will begin renovating its dining hall to create additional space to gather for meals as a community.

These capital projects, together with the ongoing development of the school's integrated curriculum and community life initiatives, are informed by the five strategic priorities articulated in the *Courage to Climb Higher* strategic plan:

- Educational Excellence: Supporting the unlimited potential of all learners.
- Our Mountain: IMS's expansive natural setting invites limitless opportunities.
- Belonging: Deepening our connection to and responsibility for ourselves and each other.
- The Joy of Childhood: Cultivating joy and play activates individual potential.
- The Next 100 Years: Ensuring a sustainable, thriving school for generations.

These strategic priorities act as a guide in the school's work day to day, while also reflecting the way the community looks toward the future.

THE INTERIM HEAD OF SCHOOL

The interim head of school will report to the Board of Trustees and lead a strong team of senior leaders across the administration and all departments. This team of seasoned professionals includes the assistant head of school and dean of faculty, the assistant head of school for student life, the director of admissions and financial aid, the director of advancement, the director of communications, the director for equity, inclusion, and belonging, the dean of academics, the head of lower school, the director of sustainability, the director of secondary school advising, the chief financial officer, and an executive assistant.

To best serve IMS during this leadership transition, the successful interim head must be prepared to address three broad objectives as outlined following.

1. Foster joy, nurture relationships, and support the community during a period of transition

At IMS, students develop positive, trusting relationships that allow them to discover their potential while celebrating the joy of childhood and a sense of adventure. IMS prides itself on its inclusive community and will rely on the interim head's leadership to support and reinforce this culture during their tenure. The interim head will cultivate relationships with IMS students, parents, faculty and staff based on trust and transparency and will strive to bolster productive dialogue and collaboration. In this work, the interim head will honor the School's traditions and add their own joy and personality in bringing the wider school community of students, families, faculty, staff, and alumni together in celebratory and fun ways. Working in partnership with the senior leadership team, the interim head will be a team player who balances visibility and accessibility with support, and leads with executive presence that instills confidence and calm.

2. Sustain momentum and advance the strategic plan in service of IMS's mission and vision

The IMS community endeavors to sustain its impressive trajectory through this period of leadership transition. The interim head will work collaboratively with leaders across IMS to further existing work and continue momentum as articulated in the five strategic priorities in *Courage to Climb Higher*. Ongoing initiatives include curriculum mapping, enhancing connection across the Lower and Upper schools, continued attention to faculty and staff recruitment and retention, as well as major capital building and renovation projects already underway. In all of this work, the interim head will begin with an understanding of efforts already underway, will add their own experience and perspectives, and will be inclusive and consultative, leaning on the institutional knowledge and expertise of IMS community members to inform key decisions.

The current strategic plan articulates two additional priorities critical to the IMS community: long-term sustainability and success of the school, and a deep commitment to "be the change and raise the B.A.R. (bravery, action, and resilience)" in connection with diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work. In recent years, IMS leadership has focused on expanding the school's commitments to both of these priorities through curricular development, faculty professional development, affinity groups, a social justice student group, and tailored community and residential events. The interim head will lead, in both word and action, with courage and intentionality to foster an educational environment that is inclusive and welcoming, instills care for our environment and community, and values the dignity of all people.

3. Coach and empower the senior leadership team in collaborative and individual endeavors

The IMS senior leadership team (SLT) is a high-functioning group of dedicated educators and administrators who are critical to the school's success in achieving its strategic goals and nurturing the vibrancy of our community. The interim head will support SLT members to effectively manage the school's operations and will ensure that each administrator's responsibilities continue to leverage their talents and capacities.

As IMS has grown significantly in recent years, the SLT has undertaken efforts to optimize administrative systems to be sustainable and serve a school of IMS's current size. The interim head will support SLT's ongoing work in auditing and refining school systems, processes, and policies to ensure both functionality and efficiency. They will help employ best practices and tailor them to the unique culture and needs of the IMS community. An experienced interim head will assist the SLT in developing effective lines of communication across internal teams and with the community. Where appropriate, an experienced interim will analyze and report on current systems and identify opportunities for continued growth, efficiency, and improvement with an eye toward program refinement and ensuring an informed and smooth transition to the incoming permanent head of school.

The interim head will be highly engaged while practicing distributed leadership, relying on SLT members' expertise and valuing their institutional knowledge and perspectives in providing the best support to IMS students, faculty, staff, and parents in moments of joy and challenge. An experienced coach with deep emotional intelligence, the interim head will approach mentoring relationships with SLT members with curiosity and an eagerness to support their professional growth, including the integration of a new chief financial officer.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- Professional purpose aligned with IMS's mission
- Desire to join a tight-knit, residential learning community during a time of transition;
- A joyful disposition, sense of humor, patience, and genuine curiosity about PreK-9 learning;
- Ability to energize the community while modeling dignity, respect, and compassion;
- An aptitude for building trust and developing strong relationships internally and externally;
- Ability to lead high-performing teams, knowing when to be out front or support from behind;
- Exceptional verbal and written communication skills, tailoring messages to varied audiences;
- A strong administrative record, business acumen; grasp of independent school finances;
- Experience with residential programs or boarding schools preferred;
- Experience leading organizations with a diverse set of international stakeholders preferred;
- Experience with PreK-8/9 education preferred.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search. All inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (CVs with letters of interest) should be sent electronically and in confidence to:

Katie Rockman, Partner
Elizabeth Weithman, Managing Associate
Corinne Crews, Associate
Maria Connor, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/indian-mountain-/interim-head-school>

Indian Mountain School seeks faculty and staff members who are eager to participate in an inclusive, respectful, and diverse school community. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Indian Mountain School is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its employment policies, educational policies, admissions policies, financial aid and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

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