

Indian Mountain School



Search for the Head of School

IMS holds a spirit of possibility. Our children learn with joy and lead with heart, and our leaders do the same. 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 our next head of school a person who understands that growth must be nurtured with care; that there is magic in the mess; and that a mountain can serve as a local expression of the values of a global community. If you are an educator who pursues excellence by leading with curiosity, purpose, and joy, we invite you to learn more about IMS, our mission, and our people—and to explore whether we may be mutually well suited to take on our next adventures together.

- *IMS Head of School Search Committee*

THE SEARCH

Indian Mountain School (IMS) seeks a strategic, collaborative, and student-centered leader to serve as the 11th head of school, building on IMS's longstanding commitment to honesty, compassion, and respect in the pursuit of holistic educational excellence. Building on a decade of growth and progress, this visionary leader will work in partnership with stakeholders across the IMS community to envision for IMS—and then reach—the next horizon.

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. Students graduate and advance to secondary school prepared to lead with courage and purpose. The new head of school will join the IMS community at an exciting moment as the school has been on an impressive upward trajectory. In the past decade, 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 equity, inclusion, and belonging (EIB).

The incoming head will continue IMS's forward momentum and shepherd a strong school into its next era. Specifically, this leader will hone IMS's identity and value proposition; enhance connectivity between the lower and upper schools; invest in faculty and staff recruitment, development, and retention; strengthen school communication channels and operating systems; advance the school's EIB and sustainability commitments; and serve as an engaged and accessible member of the school's tight-knit community and as a compelling external ambassador for IMS.

IMS has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of its next 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 nine 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 community.

On the school's upper campus, students in fifth through ninth grades pursue a curriculum rooted in academic exploration, service leadership, and outdoor learning. 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, and 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 curiosity. 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 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 a variety of learning styles. Through its Ascend program, the school provides specialized support for students with dyslexia and other diagnosed language-based learning differences. With comprehensive tutoring, English language learning, and additional academic services, IMS supports both traditional and non-traditional learners.

Recent and ongoing major capital projects are concentrated on expanding community spaces. These revitalized spaces reflect a central tenet of the IMS ethos: our deepest learning occurs when we are together in community. The new turf Centennial Field and 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 the quality of 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 auditorium and 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 and sustainability 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 present work and future ambitions.

THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

The head will ensure that every IMS student is known and respected. They will clearly articulate the school's mission and values; lead, inspire, attract, and develop a talented faculty and staff; and oversee the daily operations of the school and its programs. First and foremost, the head holds the vision for IMS's future, carries its distinctive culture, and operates as its chief communicator and leader by example.

The head of school will report to the Board of Trustees and lead a strong team of senior administrators. The senior leadership team 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 of EIB, the dean of academics, the

head of lower school, the director of sustainability programming and initiatives, the chief financial officer (CFO), and an executive assistant.

The head, in collaboration with the CFO, manages a school budget of approximately \$14 million. Over the last four years, IMS has raised roughly \$10 million in support of capital building projects and the annual fund, which has experienced a 78% increase and four consecutive years exceeding \$1 million. The head will endeavor to sustain this growing culture of philanthropy.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

To best serve IMS, the successful head must be prepared to address the following opportunities and challenges.

1. Lead IMS into its next era, sustaining its strategic momentum through forward-looking vision while refining programs and operations

In close collaboration with the board and the entire IMS community, the next head of school will craft an ambitious and compelling vision for the school's next chapter, building off its existing momentum and the *Courage to Climb Higher* strategic plan. Ongoing initiatives include curriculum mapping, bridging the lower and upper schools, balancing wide-ranging opportunities in the cocurricular program, faculty and staff recruitment and retention, and completing major capital building and renovation projects currently underway. In looking to the future and crafting a cohesive and exciting vision, the head will further define and hone IMS's identity and value proposition, articulating the distinctive elements of the holistic IMS experience. Given the school's recent enrollment growth, the head will attend to growing pains, refine systems and processes, improve program delivery, and examine the school's operations to help IMS better live into its new size. Making the most of its geography and the resource and asset that is Indian Mountain, the school aspires to deepen its sense of place, commitment to sustainability, joy of the outdoors, and reliance on nature as the ultimate classroom. In all of the above work, the next head should prioritize establishing clear and transparent mechanisms for communicating with IMS stakeholders—both the delivery of regular and transparent outbound messages and updates as well as systems and structures whereby community members have the opportunity to share input on important school-wide matters.

2. Recruit, retain, develop, and support a talented faculty and staff

The head will build on IMS's strong academic reputation, encourage innovation among the faculty and staff, and celebrate the intellectual life of the school. The head must be a devoted advocate for the adult community, continuing to prioritize the school's talent strategy in a tough and competitive market. Adults at the school are asked to wear many hats, particularly in an immersive junior boarding environment. The new head will continue IMS's work to examine the triple threat model of teaching, coaching, and living in community, determining what that model could and should look like for the modern age. The head will bring in or seek out new ideas, best practices, and thought leadership in balancing these roles and responsibilities while best serving students and creating opportunities for professional growth and development. IMS has the potential to attract and develop top talent to the school. A key piece of this work is ensuring a robust system of regular reviews for

IMS' faculty and staff and developing meaningful feedback loops among leaders and teams to encourage real-time development. Long-term, IMS aspires to grow its reputation as a key producer of young, talented, and innovative teachers through a summer teaching institute for new teachers or similar professional development programming opportunities. The head will also be highly engaged while practicing distributed leadership, relying on the expertise of the senior leadership team (SLT) and valuing their institutional knowledge and perspectives across all school and community-related endeavors. An experienced coach with deep emotional intelligence, the head will approach mentoring relationships with SLT members with curiosity and an eagerness to support their professional growth.

3. Enhance connection and collaboration between the lower and upper schools

IMS's lower school serves grades pre-K to four and sits just around the corner from the upper school. The charming, bucolic lower campus provides IMS' youngest learners with an enriching, age-appropriate environment tailor-made to support their development. Similarly, the upper campus has been carefully designed to provide a best-in-class academic and cocurricular experience for students in grades five through nine, about half of whom live on campus in the residential program. The next head of school will work to ensure that students, faculty, and families on both campuses feel well supported and connected to one another, building on existing cross-divisional initiatives and introducing new opportunities for collaboration that will deepen ties between the lower and upper schools. Possible areas to explore include programs that better prepare rising fifth graders for the transition to the upper campus, chances for upper campus students to visit the lower school as role models or peer mentors, opportunities for faculty to build more intentional curricular bridges across the two campuses, and occasions for intentional family connections across campuses to build a more cohesive community. The next head of school should capitalize on opportunities to foster even stronger ties across the two divisions and create a shared and singular identity for IMS.

4. Nurture a welcoming and inclusive school community and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

IMS maintains a deep commitment to "be the change and raise the B.A.R. (bravery, action, and resilience)" in connection with its EIB work. In recent years, IMS leadership has focused on EIB initiatives including curricular development, faculty professional development, affinity groups, a social justice student group, and tailored community and residential events. The head is expected to lead, in both word and action, with courage and intentionality to foster an educational environment that is inclusive and welcoming, instills care for the community, and values the dignity of all people. The head will be particularly sensitive to IMS's international and neurodiverse student populations in effectively meeting their needs and ambitions while enhancing the school's cultural competence, its ability to serve a diversity of students and families, and its program delivery across all EIB initiatives.

5. Serve as the IMS ambassador-in-chief both internally and externally, nurturing relationships and inspiring joy in the community

At IMS, students develop positive, trusting relationships that allow them to discover their potential

while reveling in the joy of childhood and adventure. IMS prides itself on its inclusive community and spirit of possibility and will rely on the head's leadership to support and reinforce this culture. The head will cultivate relationships with IMS students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni based on trust and transparency and will strive to bolster productive dialogue and collaboration. In this work, the head will honor the school's traditions and add their own joy and personality in bringing the wider school community together in celebratory and fun ways. Working in partnership with the senior leadership team, the head will be a team player who balances visibility and accessibility with support and leads with executive presence that instills confidence and calm. The head also represents IMS externally with alumni, donors, other heads of junior boarding and local independent schools, secondary school partners, and prospective students and families domestically and internationally. They must be a compelling storyteller and advocate for IMS's value proposition.

6. Adroitly steward and grow IMS's resource base

IMS has enjoyed a stable and growing financial foundation for several years now, but the school's ambitions and long-term sustainability necessitate a consistent focus on resources. The head will continue to elevate the school's fundraising profile and will collaborate with the board to ensure the school's fiscal strength into the future. The generosity of the parent community is notable, but there remains an opportunity to build a culture of philanthropy among IMS's alumni population through enhanced engagement and connection to the school. IMS has already been through a significant building phase and boasts impressive facilities, and the head will need to see ongoing projects through to completion. The next stage of fundraising and resource cultivation is likely to focus less on capital projects, with the exception of renovating and expanding faculty housing, and more on growing unrestricted funds and the endowment, increasing financial aid resources, and recruiting and retaining top notch faculty. The head will also explore additional revenue-producing opportunities, especially leveraging a slow summer period and IMS's rich campus environment.

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 and impressive leadership experience aligned with IMS's mission;
- Desire to join and lead a tight-knit, residential learning community, participating fully in all aspects of school life;
- Joyful disposition, sense of humor, patience, and genuine curiosity about pre-K through grade 9 learning;
- Ability to energize the entire IMS community while modeling dignity, respect, and compassion, and practicing excellence in all ways;
- Aptitude for building trust and developing strong relationships internally and externally, including with faculty, staff, prospective and current families, students, donors, community leaders, and other independent school leaders;

- Ability and desire to connect personally with children in the pre-K through grade nine age range; no person is too big or too small to be seen, known, and valued;
- Ability to lead and develop high-performing teams collectively and individually, knowing when to be out front or to support from behind;
- Exceptional verbal and written communication skills, tailoring messages to varied audiences;
- Strong administrative record, business acumen, and grasp of independent school finances;
- Ability to support the admissions and advancement operations to sustain enrollment and raise the fundraising profile and capabilities of the institution;
- Experience leading organizations with a diverse set of international stakeholders is preferred;
- Experience with residential programs or boarding schools is preferred; and
- Experience with pre-K through grade eight or nine education is 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
Maria Connor, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

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

Indian Mountain School

ISAACSON, MILLER