

UPPER SCHOOL DIRECTOR SEARCH

THE BUSH SCHOOL

Seattle, Washington

bush.edu

Start Date: July 2025



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

To spark in students of diverse backgrounds and talents a passion for learning, accomplishment, and contribution to their communities.

Vision

The Bush School is committed to preparing students to lead purposeful lives, setting them on a path to change the world. Founded on the principles of progressive education, our experiential program inspires students to drive inquiry, actively engaging their teachers, curricula, and environment.

At a Glance



Established
1924



Upper School Enrollment
309



Faculty in the Upper School
49



Student-teacher ratio
7:1



Students of color
51%



Financial aid awarded
\$5.3M



Faculty with advanced degrees
73%



Campus size
9 acres

Total enrollment: 737

Total faculty: 87

Faculty of color: 30%

Students receiving aid: 23%

Endowment: \$31M

Annual operating budget: \$36M

Participation in athletics: 68%

Art studios: 7



Overview

Located in Seattle’s charming Madison Valley neighborhood, The Bush School is the only independent school in the Seattle area offering a K-12 education on a single campus. In a dynamic, inclusive, and joyful learning community, students at Bush not only love to learn, but learn to lead. Acknowledging that students live in a diverse and multidimensional world that requires them to be problem solvers, clear thinkers, ethical actors, and global stewards, these critical skills are taught intentionally from Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade in all areas of the school program. Education based on these foundations prepares students and graduates to make a meaningful difference in the world.

For the past 100 years, the school’s educational philosophy has centered on the belief that students learn most effectively through active engagement with ideas. Bush offers unique, stimulating educational experiences, characterized by experiential learning. Students learn how to learn, and are eager to continue learning—confidence, curiosity, and a thirst for challenge become a part of who they are. The school prepares students for college, and, more importantly, for life. The professional community seeks to encourage and support the whole child, and students are inspired to take risks and to strive. Reflected one parent, “One of the best things about Bush is that there are a lot of ways to be excellent here. We celebrate academic excellence. We celebrate athletic excellence. We celebrate artistic excellence. There are many ways to be great—and that’s a really healthy thing to keep telling our kids.” The Bush School has a history of educating students to use ethical judgment and to lead through action. As such, the School encourages all community members to work to broaden their perspectives and to recognize that differences create strength in the community and help all to be more engaged citizens. Bush is committed to promoting equity, justice, and peace.

It’s an exciting time to join The Bush School community—both continuity and change will welcome the school’s next Upper School Director in the summer of 2025. Current Assistant Head of School for Academics, Sarah Smith, is transitioning to Head of School (for more about the search and transition, click [HERE](#)), current Upper School Director Matt Lai is transitioning to the role of Assistant Head for K-12 Programs, and, this spring, the community is beginning a strategic planning process that will extend through the calendar year. The Upper School Director reports to the Head of School and is a member of the highly collaborative and dynamic Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Upper School Director oversees a division that includes 309 students and 49 faculty and leads a team that includes an Upper School Dean of Academics, Upper School Dean of Students, and Grade Level Deans. The Upper School Director also works closely with Department Chairs whose work spans both K-12 and 6-12. The School seeks an Upper School Director who will advance the school’s philosophy and mission. Strong candidates will have a background in progressive education, espouse a student-centered pedagogy, understand and celebrate students in high school, seek to partner with families, and have experience supporting and guiding faculty and staff, know how to create and develop systems, and embrace experiential learning.



Opportunities and Challenges

Current Upper School Director Matt Lai began leading the Upper School in 2021 as the school was emerging from the pandemic and [renovating the Upper School campus](#). Under his leadership, the division successfully transitioned into new spaces, rebuilt community, and developed systems and structures that support the work of faculty and staff and provides consistency. The next Upper School Director inherits a healthy and forward-looking division. The compelling priorities, opportunities, and challenges for the next Upper School Director include:

Supporting the growth of the Upper School: The renovation of the Upper School Campus allowed the division to grow. Ideally, each grade level will include 85-90 students.

- With growth, the division has had to adapt to a broader range of learners. The next Director has the opportunity to explore ways to appropriately challenge, engage, and support students.
- Partner closely with other school leaders, especially the enrollment team, to ensure retention from the Middle School and to recruit mission-aligned students to the Upper School. The next Upper School Director must be an engaging spokesperson for the school who can clearly and compellingly share the intellectual and academic merit, stories, and data to retain and attract students and their families in a competitive independent school market.

Continuing to align and refine the K-12 program. The next Upper School Director has the opportunity to partner closely with the Assistant Head and other division directors to align the K-12 academic and co-curricular programs. The current team is highly collaborative, connected to, and supportive of one another. “We genuinely like and trust one another,” noted one colleague.

Engaging in strategic planning. Developing a new strategic framework will begin early in 2025 and continue through the calendar year. Through the SLT, the next Upper School Director will have the opportunity to engage in the planning process and help operationalize the plan in years to come.



Developing a semester program at the Methow Campus. The Bush School campus extends beyond the urban landscape of Seattle across the Cascade mountains to the Methow Campus in the Methow Valley in Mazama, WA. Acquired in 2016, the [Methow Campus](#) includes 20 acres and facilities that currently support grade level retreats and outdoor and immersive experiential opportunities for the school community. Bush anticipates beginning a semester program in the next two years and the next Upper School Director will be a key partner in the realization of the program.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

- Thorough and demonstrated understanding of and love for working with Upper School students with great energy, playfulness, and humor.
- Adept at creating, developing, refining, and sustaining processes and systems that support efficiency, provide clarity and consistency, and help sustain the work of others.
- Engaging storyteller with dynamic public speaking and writing skills and demonstrable ability to connect others to the work, mission, and stories of the school.
- Effective, efficient, and thoughtful communicator and listener with the willingness to engage in difficult conversations with candor and tact.
- Well-versed in and committed to community, equity, and inclusion practices. Engaged in their own identity work and able to lead the work in schools.
- Curricular leader and innovator with an understanding of progressive, differentiated, inquiry-based, and developmentally-aligned models of teaching and learning.
- Strength in building and maintaining connections and community between colleagues, divisions, parents, and students.
- Enthusiastic community-builder and connector—highly visible and engaged around school.
- A collaborative and humble leadership and work style built on approachability, responsiveness, and transparency.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about The Bush School.

[School Website](#)

[School History](#)

[Community, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[Upper School Academics](#)

[College Profile 2024-25 \(student designed!\)](#)

[Strategic Framework](#)

[Education Master Plan](#)

[Virtual Campus Tour](#)

[About Seattle, Washington](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission); and
- Responses to writing prompts that will be shared with candidates upon expression of interest.

Jennifer Wong Christensen

Senior Consultant

jennifer.christensen@carneysandoe.com

Dr. Karen Neitzel, Ed.D.

Senior Consultant

karen.neitzel@carneysandoe.com

The full-time equivalent salary range for this position is \$165,000-190,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise. Important context: The State of Washington does not collect state income tax.