

McLean School

Transformative.

McLean School Head of Upper School – Potomac, MD July 2025

Overview

McLean School, located in suburban Washington, DC, walks the talk. Many schools talk about the warmth of their community, the collegiality, and the deep sense of caring and trust among and between students, faculty, staff, administration, and parents. At McLean, born from the mission of serving learners that span the range of racial, socio-economic, cultural, and learning strengths and challenges, that deep sense of caring for one another provides a bedrock foundation. Many schools talk about their expanding ability to serve students who learn differently, but McLean has been built for that mission from the start. Through its Abilities Model[®], McLean teaches to each student's strengths, while providing support in areas of need, and McLean never defines students by what they cannot do. Many schools whose populations include both typical learners and those who learn differently talk about their aspiration for graduates to attend college. At McLean School, that is not only an aspiration, but is reality for nearly 100% of graduates.

McLean School in many ways looks like a typical, maybe even traditional college-prep school. But what happens within the walls of the School is anything but traditional. The School has attracted deeply caring and trained educators whose passion is discovering and teaching to the unique abilities of each student in whatever innovative, personal, or progressive manner is best for the student.

With close to 500 students in grades K-12, including 211 in the Upper School, McLean School is delivering on the promise of giving students skills, confidence, and knowledge to succeed in college and beyond. With the departure of the Head of Upper School, McLean seeks a talented, experienced, and committed Head of Upper School starting July 1, 2025, to build on the School's culture, strengthen and collaborate with other administrators and divisional leaders and ensure the school continues to fulfill its potential well into the future.



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Mission

McLean School's mission is to make education accessible, stimulating, and meaningful to a broad range of bright K-12 learners. We understand each student's unique strengths and challenges, and support both in a way that fosters intellectual growth as well as confidence, self-advocacy, empathy, and connection. At McLean, students succeed because they learn how to learn in an inclusive, conscientious community of caring teachers and peers.

The School

Changing the lives of students and families, McLean School is Washington, DC's most comprehensive and academically rigorous full-scope college preparatory program for bright, college-bound students, including those with dyslexia, school-based anxiety, ADHD, and executive functioning challenges. For over 70 years, the School has helped students realize their full potential with a curriculum that is traditional without being rigid, challenging without being intimidating, and designed with the real world in mind. Recognizing the School's important work, students are drawn from 9 counties – and faculty and staff from 13 counties – in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

McLean recognizes that all children are natural learners, but that they learn in different ways. The School's Abilities Model® is a more complete way to understand how student minds work. This approach recognizes each child for their strengths, providing support in areas of need and fostering resilience, transforming how students view themselves and their futures. McLean focuses on what a child can do, not what they can't—all within a college preparatory program that incorporates challenging academics, championship sports teams, visual and performing arts, robotics, service learning, and more.

The School does not employ the traditional "learning specialist" that requires students to be pulled out from their classroom. Instead, every teacher is a specialist in learning. McLean has a Coordinator of Learning Services in each division who works seamlessly with students, teachers, and parents. Experienced faculty members teach the way students learn in small classes – the average class size in the Upper School is 10 students per teacher – embedding support in the classroom. These supports combine in different ways for different learners, evolving along with the students as they grow. This approach of scaffolding and gradual release builds confidence, self-advocacy skills, and resilience along with important learning habits.



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Over the past 10 years, Upper School (grades 9-12) enrollment has grown by nearly 50 percent to over 210 students. Over the next 5 years, the Upper School is looking to grow to over 275 students. Accompanying this growth has been an increase in course offerings, including 15 AP courses, Honors classes, and independent study opportunities, clubs and extracurricular activities, and visual and performing arts.

Reaching all corners of the McLean experience, the School's commitment to diversity and equity is an extension of its mission to make education accessible, stimulating, and meaningful to a broad range of learners. McLean embraces diversity and values the integrity of all individuals. This recognition enriches the community and encourages students to be better leaders and more responsible citizens.

The Location

Potomac, Maryland, is a suburban community located about 14 miles northwest of Washington, DC. With tree-lined streets and lush lawns, the area is quiet and relaxing for its residents, especially those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of Washington DC. Although primarily a residential area, there are still many nearby shopping and dining options. Potomac is also very close to many natural parks and preserves, including Great Falls Park along the Potomac River, Scotts Run Nature Preserve, and Cabin John Park.

Of course, Potomac also offers convenient access to the DC area. As the nation's capital and the sixth-largest metropolitan area in the country, DC is a diverse city with vast cultural resources. An extensive public transportation system connects the city's many neighborhoods. While many associate the city primarily with politics and government, DC also boasts incredible access to history, including the many landmarks on and around the National Mall, the Library of Congress, and the myriad of offerings of the Smithsonian Institutions, with its 19 museums, all free and open to the public. DC is similarly rich in the performing arts, home to the Kennedy Center, National Opera and Ballet, and the Folger Shakespeare Library and Theater.

Job Responsibilities

Among the many responsibilities of the Head of Upper School are:

- Set and maintain high standards and expectations for all students, faculty, and staff for academic performance and personal responsibility for behavior.



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- Work with faculty and staff to foster a caring community in which each student is seen and heard and the division meets their educational needs and challenges them in their areas of strength.
- Oversee and supervise the hiring, evaluation, and improvement programs for Upper School faculty and staff.
- Support and mentor Upper School faculty and staff in their own professional development as well as their teaching.
- Actively participate in efforts to keep current with and adopt as appropriate thought leadership and emerging practices and pedagogies for the student populations McLean serves.
- Collaborate with other division heads, department chairs, and senior leadership to assure that the entire school adheres to the same student-centered mission and vision.
- Mediate between faculty, between faculty and parents, between faculty and students, and between students in an atmosphere of professional rapport and mutual respect drawing upon the School's work and commitment to restorative practices.
- Assist the Admission process by speaking at prospective parent events and participating in the evaluation of all new student applications for the Upper School.
- Manage and oversee the budget for all departmental purchases within the Upper School.
- Actively participate in school-wide engagements, events, fundraising, and activities that support the School.

Desired Skills and Personal Characteristics

Among many attributes, successful candidates will:

- Have an unending love of kids, a steadfast belief that every student can be successful, and a desire to get to know each student in the division.
- Have an understanding of how students with dyslexia, anxiety, ADHD, and organizational issues learn and how best to support them.
- Be familiar with and have a passion for individualized approaches that teach to each student's strengths, ensure The [Abilities Model](#)[®] is a foremost priority, and be open-minded and eager to learn and adopt McLean's uniquely successful ways of working with students' academic and social/emotional needs.
- Have classroom teaching experience and the desire to support classroom teachers.



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- Possess proven experience with the full range of high school leadership and administrative responsibilities, particularly in managing, nurturing, and mentoring a growing and diverse faculty.
- Be a thought leader in curriculum and pedagogy and work collaboratively with others to identify opportunities for growth and bring about desired change.
- Embody a compassionate, flexible, and caring leadership style while still having the ability to make tough-but-correct decisions when necessary.
- Be particularly attuned to and skillful in working with parents who have a high level of concern for their children as learners and as emotionally and socially healthy individuals.
- Possess experience with the tools of high schools, including schedules, curriculum, evaluation, assessment, college-counseling, and budgets.
- Lead with outgoing, energetic, positive, engaging communications and personal style.

Salary Range: \$120,000-\$150,000.

To Apply: Interested and qualified candidates should submit, and as separate PDF documents, the following materials:

1. Current resume, including phone number and email address
2. Cover letter stating interest in and qualifications for the position

To Rice Bryan (rbryan@carneysandoe.com), and Sabrina Zurkuhlen (Sabrina.zurkuhlen@carneysandoe.com). Please do not contact the school directly.



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