



Search for the Director of the Upper School
Flint Hill School
Oakton, VA

OUR VISION FOR EVERY STUDENT

Take meaningful risks. Be yourself. Make a difference.

THE SEARCH

Flint Hill School (Flint Hill or the School), an innovative preparatory school right outside of Washington, D.C., seeks a collaborative, empathetic, and strategic leader to serve as its Director of the Upper School (the Division Director). Flint Hill is known for its student-centered approach to teaching, a diverse and inclusive community, and a strong emphasis on character education; this leader will advance that critical work as an integral member of the Senior Leadership Team. With a Head of School in his third year and a new strategic plan forthcoming, this moment presents an opportunity to further develop an exciting academic and co-curricular vision for the Upper School, centered around the unifying goal of best serving students and families across all divisions.

Founded in 1956, Flint Hill serves students from junior kindergarten through grade twelve, with a total enrollment of approximately 1,045 students and 160 faculty and staff members across two campuses in three academic buildings. Flint Hill was originally founded in 1956 as Flint Hill Preparatory and reorganized in 1990 as Flint Hill School. Since the reorganization, it has evolved into a prominent JK-12 institution that reflects a continuous dedication to excellence, adaptability, and meeting the needs of a changing educational landscape. The School inspires students to reach their greatest potential while maintaining balance and well-being, supporting a holistic approach to academic and personal growth. Flint Hill's five core values guide every interaction: respect and value all equally, lead and support with compassion, act with integrity, imagine what is possible, and blaze the trail. Forty-seven percent of students identify as students of color, and the Learning Center was one of the first of its kind in the area, providing direct support for students with different learning needs. A culture of support and inclusion allows students to feel welcome and connected from day one, whether they're a "lifer" or transferring from another school. Flint Hill's ability to honor its roots while embracing modern advancements has made it a cornerstone of independent education in Northern Virginia.

The Upper School building – the largest division, with 568 students and 67 faculty across grades 9-12 – expanded nearly 25 years ago. The Upper School offers a comprehensive academic program in a supportive, close-knit community, exposing students to more freedom and choice and setting the stage for college life. Flint Hill believes that learning led by curiosity inspires students to develop passion and purpose, and this approach is evident in hands-on learning, senior projects, real-world connections, and student-designed clubs. The Upper School cultivates deep learning and encourages students to pursue all interests. To prepare students for college, four full-time college counselors focus on truly getting to know each student

and guiding them to “right-fit” schools. Students graduate as confident self-advocates with the skills and maturity to excel in college and beyond.

The Director of the Upper School is charged with overseeing the delivery of a robust academic curriculum and building a community and culture that reflects Flint Hill’s mission, vision, core values, and statement of institutional equity and inclusion. The Division Director works closely with the Assistant Director of the Upper School to create a positive and balanced academic climate designed to support all upper school students in reaching their goals. Among various priorities, the Division Director will particularly focus on: serving as the central, visible figure for the Upper School; partnering with an engaged and enthusiastic parent community; operationalizing a new schoolwide strategic plan within the Upper School; providing intellectual leadership and academic vision to amplify the Upper School curriculum; fostering collaboration between divisions and across the student lifecycle; cultivating an inclusive, caring, and supportive community; advancing a commitment to teaching excellence and professional development; and serving as a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Flint Hill has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE UPPER SCHOOL

Flint Hill describes its educational model as one of innovation, inspiring students to blaze trails of their own. The Division Director must embody a culture of innovation and collaboration to lead and shape the direction of the academic and co-curricular program for the Upper School, ensuring that the division’s program and culture resonate with the mission, vision, and core values of the School; the Flint Hill Statement of Institutional Equity and Inclusion; and the Portrait of a Flint Hill Student.

The Director will be expected to quickly build authentic, trusting relationships with members of the Flint Hill community and to effectively lead and manage the expectations of a strong faculty and involved parent community. They will teach in the Upper School and be an active and engaged member of the faculty as well as its leader.

Reporting directly to the Head of School, the Director of the Upper School will serve on an 11-person Senior Leadership Team, including the Head of School, the Associate Head of School for Finance and Operations, the Assistant Head of School for Advancement, the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Director of Institutional Equity and Inclusion, the Director of Academics, the Director of Counseling, the Director of Marketing and Communication, and the Directors of the Middle School and Lower School. They will supervise upper school faculty, administrators, and staff, including their own Assistant, the Assistant Director of the Upper School and Academic Dean, the Dean of Students, the Director of College Counseling, the Director of Athletics, and the Registrar.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE UPPER SCHOOL

Key priorities for the incoming Director of the Upper School include:

Serve as the central, visible figure for the Upper School.

The Division Director must uphold and celebrate the many individual human connections that keep the Upper School operating at its best. This leader will be a skilled communicator and community builder, creating and nurturing close relationships with students, families, faculty, and staff through thoughtful decision-making, clear communication, and inclusive processes. They will build strong, positive, and transparent partnerships with the division's key stakeholders and will support faculty and staff in parent communication; celebrate the diverse interests and achievements of students across academics, athletics, and the arts; and serve as a key voice with prospective students and families. They will value the holistic nature of school life, attending Upper School and all-school events and activities and serving as one of the "administrator on duty" team members at designated school events, activities, and games. In this work, it will be important to bring the Upper School together in celebratory and fun ways, deepening the collective sense of community, school spirit, and joy. Flint Hill students are deeply and thoughtfully engaged in the school community, and it is essential that the next Division Director continues to value their perspectives and actively seek their thoughts and ideas. The successful leader will balance visibility and accessibility – genuinely knowing and caring about every member of the community – with a strong and decisive executive presence in service of Flint Hill.

Partner with an engaged and enthusiastic parent community.

Crucially, the Division Director will partner with an engaged parent community, 75 percent of whom did not attend independent schools themselves and are new to the independent school experience. Flint Hill's parents care deeply about the success and wellbeing of their children and seek a Division Director who will consistently prioritize what is best for students. Many parents work in entrepreneurial roles and often in industries directly or indirectly related to the federal government. The Division Director must enthusiastically and proactively build relationships with parents, developing a reservoir of goodwill that can be tapped during challenging moments. This engagement has historically included leading parent coffees on relevant topics, writing a bimonthly newsletter to keep families informed and connected, and curating additional resources to support parents as they navigate the Upper School journey alongside their children.

Operationalize a new schoolwide strategic plan within the Upper School.

Flint Hill is in the process of crafting a new strategic plan and intends to finalize it in the Summer of 2025, just before the arrival of this new Director of the Upper School. With this roadmap in hand, the Division Director will provide visionary leadership to shape the Upper School's strategic direction and continued success in line with the School's broader strategic plan. The plan will outline strategies to enhance programs, practices, and resources to best equip students with essential skills – and faculty and staff with the resources essential to supporting them. The Division Director must effectively manage the long-term strategic view alongside the daily rhythms and challenges of a bustling and diverse school community.

Provide intellectual leadership and academic vision to amplify the Upper School curriculum.

The Director of the Upper School – in concert with the Director of Academics, the Upper School Assistant Director and Academic Dean, Department Chairs, the Registrar, and upper school faculty – will steward a comprehensive, innovative, and appropriately demanding academic curriculum aligned with the mission and vision of the School. Flint Hill believes in redefining what educational excellence looks like. Invariably curious, faculty ask questions like, “Imagine if?” and “What’s possible?” And they encourage students to do the same. The faculty’s expertise and commitment to innovative teaching are complemented by a personal approach that emphasizes respect and communication. The Division Director must lead critical discussions around strategy and direction, while recognizing the essential value of different pathways to achieve communal goals. They will assess any future curricular initiatives through rigorous, research-based exploration. They will also bring scholarly credibility, teaching a semester-long course that models excellence in pedagogy, and will demonstrate intellectual curiosity across the full breadth of disciplines, encouraging faculty as experts in their fields.

Foster collaboration among divisions and across the student life cycle.

The Director of the Upper School will encourage collaboration across departments and divisions, working closely with the Head of School and their Lower and Middle School counterparts to ensure smooth divisional transitions and a consistent throughline in Flint Hill’s academic, extracurricular, and programmatic offerings. This work begins as early as admission, during which the Division Director will evaluate and make recommendations on prospective student applications; participate in admission committee meetings during the admissions cycle; and appear and present at designated admissions events. Similarly, as a bookend, they will lead and partner with the college counseling office to support students and families in the college process. In all of this important work, they will balance inspiration with pragmatism. In the annual budget process, they will partner with the Associate Head of School for Finance and Operations, the Director of Academics, and Department Chairs to ensure the Upper School provides the best possible experience for students and families. In supervision of the Director of Athletics, they will ensure that the operation of the upper school athletics program develops student-athletes aligned with the School’s athletic philosophy designed to impart self-discipline, selflessness, and adaptability among its core tenets.

Continue to cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive community.

The next Director of the Upper School must provide leadership to advance Flint Hill’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in its intellectual and community life, as well as attention to student support and integrity. They will partner with the Upper School Dean of Students to respond to parental feedback and concerns, serve as the appeal for disciplinary decisions made by the Dean of Students, and steward significant student discipline issues that may lead to a student’s withdrawal or dismissal from the School. They will attend the Student Support Team (SST) meetings to address concerns and offer action plans for students’ academic progress and social-emotional well-being. As the leader who sets the tone for the Upper School, the Division Director will welcome and encourage difficult conversations and critically examine practices, policies, and culture to ensure they are responsive to all constituents and aligned with strategic goals. Above all, they will ensure a welcoming and safe learning environment for all members of the Flint Hill community.

Advance a commitment to teaching excellence and professional development.

The high caliber of the Flint Hill faculty is a distinct strength, and faculty recruitment, retention, and continued development will be a critical charge for the incoming Director. This leader will inherit a thriving division of multi-generational faculty, many with significant years of experience, and should be attuned to the important work of sustaining a strong faculty cohort and providing all faculty – new, mid-career, or more seasoned – with the opportunity to continue to grow, learn, and advance their teaching. The Division Director is the leader of the faculty and must value a collegial atmosphere and build consensus, conducting regular faculty meetings and professional development trainings. They must thoughtfully and collaboratively establish a process for faculty and staff to receive essential feedback and learn from colleagues, thereby investing in developing future school leaders. Pragmatically balancing individual strengths with collective needs will be a key task for this incoming leader.

Serve as a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Director of the Upper School sits on the Senior Leadership Team and joins regular, high-level discussions about Flint Hill's future, participating actively in strategic decision-making concerning broad institutional goals and initiatives. They will contribute to the School's reaccreditation process; support recruitment for schoolwide administrative positions; and collaborate in developing and implementing administrative, personnel, and curricular policies and procedures across the School. They will be expected to bring creativity in brainstorming and problem-solving to generate student-centered solutions in a dynamic school environment. A sense of humor, optimism in the face of challenge, and a high level of emotional intelligence are essential.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring many of the following personal and professional qualities:

- A distinguished record of outstanding classroom teaching as well as considerable involvement with students beyond the regular classroom;
- A nuanced understanding of student development and learning;
- Significant prior school leadership experience in an environment with high expectations;
- Successful record of administrative experience in an academically demanding and student-centered environment;
- Experience collaborating with colleagues across school divisions;
- The ability to communicate clearly and effectively with all school constituencies;
- An unwavering commitment to academic excellence and innovation in the classroom;
- Experience managing teams and high-performing individuals;
- Ample experience with faculty evaluation and assessment and comfort engaging with colleagues in conversations related to professional development and pedagogy;
- Nuanced understanding of issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in education;
- Integrity and the highest ethical, moral, and professional standards;
- A minimum of five years of experience teaching at the upper school level; and
- Excellent academic credentials; an advanced degree is preferred.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/flint-hill-school/director-upper-school>.

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Flint Hill School supports and complies with applicable provisions of local, state, and federal law that prohibit discrimination in admission, enrollment, access, or use of its educational or extracurricular programs, activities, or facilities; on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, service in the armed forces of the United States, positive HIV-related blood test results, genetic information, disability, and/or any other status or characteristic as defined and to the extent protected by applicable law.

APPENDIX: ABOUT FLINT HILL

The Flint Hill Mission

A Flint Hill education focuses on the learner. Within a context of strong relationships, we create developmental experiences that embrace the best practices of traditional and contemporary education. Through continuous growth, we actively and thoughtfully implement the ideas and resources that help each student investigate, create, and communicate collaboratively and effectively in a rapidly changing, interconnected world.

History

Founded in 1956, Flint Hill School is a private day school for all genders from junior kindergarten through grade twelve. Located on two campuses in Oakton, Virginia, Flint Hill comprises about 160 faculty and staff members and 1,045 students. The Lower School (grades JK-6) is located in the Hazel Lower School on its own nearby campus. The Middle School (grades 7 and 8) and Upper School (grades 9-12) each occupy their own buildings, sharing a 35-acre campus referred to as the Middle and Upper School Campus. The Momentum Campaign, completed in 2019, was a \$20 million campaign to build the new, state-of-the-art Peterson Middle School and refresh the Lower School. The award-winning Middle School features modern classrooms, an innovation hub with dedicated spaces for computer science and makers education, an art studio, and quiet study rooms.

Initially located in Fairfax, Virginia, Flint Hill was primarily an elementary school, emphasizing a traditional approach to education. Over time, its reputation for academic excellence and community engagement began to grow, attracting families from across the region. The desegregation of public schools led to the creation of many “white flight” schools, including, at

the time, Flint Hill. Flint Hill knows the importance of acknowledging that exclusionary aspect of its founding, as they also acknowledge the decades of important growth and evolution as Falcons – and now as Huskies – that have led to their current mission, vision, core values, and statement of institutional equity and inclusion.

In the late 1980s, Flint Hill underwent significant expansion, transitioning from its original campus in Fairfax to its current location in Oakton. This move allowed the School to broaden its scope, offering programs for middle (and ultimately high school) students and expanding its facilities to support a more comprehensive educational experience. During this period, the School also began to emphasize innovation and the integration of technology into its curriculum, which set it apart as a forward-thinking institution, ultimately earning recognition as an Apple Distinguished School, a mindset and distinction still in place today. The Upper School opened for the 2001-02 school year, with facilities for science, visual arts, athletics, language, math, and the Learning Center. The new Learning Center was one of the first of its kind in the area, providing direct support for students with different learning needs.

Fast Facts

Total Enrollment: 1,045 students
Diversity: 47 percent students of color
Upper School Enrollment: 568 students
Upper School Enrollment Capacity: 575
Upper School Student Ratio: 9:1
Academic Departments: 8
Athletic Teams: 89 teams across 22 sports

Leadership

Patrick McHonett has been the Head of Flint Hill School since July 2022. Prior to joining Flint Hill, he was the Head of St. John's Episcopal School in Orange County, California. Additional prior appointments include Associate Head of School at Phoenix Country Day School and other roles in admissions, marketing and communications, and college counseling. McHonett's academic background includes a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from Arizona State University and a bachelor of arts in literature and legal studies from Claremont McKenna College.

THE UPPER SCHOOL

Academics

Flint Hill offers a robust and innovative academic program designed to inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and creativity in students from junior kindergarten through grade twelve. Students graduate as confident self-advocates with the skills and maturity to excel in college and blaze their own trails in life. Flint Hill's commitment to fostering a growth mindset is reflected in small class sizes, where students receive individual attention and are encouraged to take intellectual risks. The School offers a wide range of Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses, allowing students to engage deeply with subjects of particular strength and interest while building a strong overall college preparatory foundation. Upper School students are supported by class deans, advisory groups, and one-on-one teacher office hours to offer close-knit

support. The teacher-student relationship is paramount at Flint Hill. All Upper School teachers offer regular office hours for students to drop in for individualized support; time to attend them is built into the daily schedule.

Ninth-grade students are required to take a Seminar, which was introduced this school year. The course is designed to provide a developmentally appropriate framework for content and behavioral strategies to help students navigate the physical, emotional, academic, and social aspects of their lives. Students explore five major content areas: identity and community, learning strategies, physical health, mindfulness and the brain, and social-emotional health. Within these units, students internalize topics and skills through reflecting, journaling, activities, and group discussion. This course is a component of Flint Hill's JK-12 Health and Well-Being Curriculum and provides opportunities for student-centered learning, increased awareness of self and others, and engagement with Flint Hill's Learning, Health, Counseling, and DEI resources.

Started in the 2023-24 school year, the Research Scholars Program allows curious and self-motivated students to develop a scientific question in consultation with the science department chair and a faculty advisor. The goal of the program is for the student to create a challenging experience – which could result in failure – that reflects an intellectual interest and that will require significant time and effort to explore. The small number of students who participate in the program will work independently on their research during non-class/school hours. Additionally, students may pursue their study over multiple semesters or academic years depending on the nature of their project and/or their results. Participants will defend their question in front of a faculty panel, presenting a poster of their findings and responding to questions from the committee.

Coordinated by Flint Hill's Academic Dean and offered through the Innovation Department, students may also propose and design a semester-long independent study. In some cases, students choose to complete an independent study because they have completed all course offerings in a specific field. In other cases, they have a particularly strong interest in a field in which Flint Hill does not offer coursework. There is a student-designed, defined goal for the experience, with regular required check-ins to ensure they are making appropriate progress. The Academic Dean reviews the student's work at the end of the term, conferring a grade and credit based on their evaluation of the student's oral feedback and written documentation of their study. Sample topics of current and past independent study programs include: Study in Abstract Algebra, Study in Post-Colonial Literature, Audio Circuit Design, Entomology, Political Culture of France, Statistical Base Math Modeling, Vergil's Eclogues, Topics in French Literature, Immigration and Integration, and Sociology & Gender Studies.

College Counseling

Four full-time college counselors focus on truly getting to know students and guiding them to “right-fit” schools. In grades 9 and 10, students are encouraged to develop the skills and habits necessary to succeed academically. The college counselors meet with 9th graders for a “Flint Hill 101” session to help them understand the importance of their academic choices and performance and to encourage them to engage in the Flint Hill community. Tenth graders participate in several sessions with the college counselors, including an interactive game about the various components of the application process and a course selection overview to select junior-year classes.

The college counseling program shifts to a more individualized process in junior year. Students are assigned their college counselor in the first semester of 11th grade and participate in a series of seminars that begin in September, related to the college search and application process. Each family meets with their college counselor in the winter of their junior year for the family conference, a session designed to learn from both the student and their family about their goals and plans for college and to answer any questions and/or address concerns. The College Counseling Office has an “open door” policy for students and welcomes them at any time. Flint Hill’s college counselors are powerful advocates.

Student Support & Student Life

The School buzzes socially and intellectually and various programs enhance and define the Flint Hill experience. The Upper School Advisory program seeks to create a community within a community, matching students with adults who will serve as guides for their journey through the academic, moral, and social challenges of their Upper School years. Class deans are assigned to each of the four grade levels to provide an administrative presence devoted to the needs of each class and individual student. Each Class dean chairs biweekly grade-level faculty meetings, working with the Upper School counselors and faculty advisors to develop plans for student assistance and support. Class deans also work with the student leaders of their particular class to develop activities that build community and encourage members of the class to exercise new forms of leadership. This structure cultivates the personal and academic growth of students and ensures that everyone is truly known and that meaningful relationships are built with students and their families.

Flint Hill students pursue the arts through their coursework, mini-courses, activities, and independent projects. Flint Hill’s Fine Arts department offers 63 programs with a range of opportunities designed to inspire creativity and foster artistic expression. Students can explore visual arts through courses in drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, and digital art. The music program provides avenues for vocal and instrumental performance, including choir, orchestra, band, and contemporary music ensembles. In theater arts, students gain experience in acting, directing, stagecraft, and production design, often showcasing their talents in school performances. The dance program allows students to express themselves through various styles of movement, while the film and media arts program equips them with technical and creative skills in filmmaking, photography, and digital storytelling.

Over 86 percent of Flint Hill students participate in athletics, with more than 89 junior varsity and varsity teams competing with DC-area schools. Athletic teams compete in the Independent School League (ISL) and the Mid-Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAC), interacting with other DC-area schools. Students can participate in sports such as soccer, basketball, volleyball, lacrosse, field hockey, tennis, golf, swimming, and cross-country, among others. Flint Hill’s state-of-the-art athletic facilities include turf fields, a gymnasium, a fitness center, and spaces for strength and conditioning programs. With opportunities for individual and team success, the athletics program plays a key role in building school spirit and pride.

Upper School students are encouraged to join the many student-led clubs and activities ranging from robotics to yearbook for up to two academic credits. Students can also join the Peer Counseling Program, a self-nominated and teacher-selected student leadership group that provides peer feedback and counseling to students.

Students can also take advantage of their proximity to Washington, D.C. by engaging in educational activities such as visiting museums and venues as well as engaging in community service to immerse themselves within the community at large, which is a large part of the School's mission. Senior projects afford the graduating class a culminating experience to allow them to explore a personal passion, career interest, or creative endeavor in a meaningful way. Typically taking place in the final weeks of the school year, these projects are student-designed and often involve internships, independent research, community service, or artistic pursuits. Seniors work closely with faculty advisors to develop and execute their projects, which are presented to the school community upon completion.