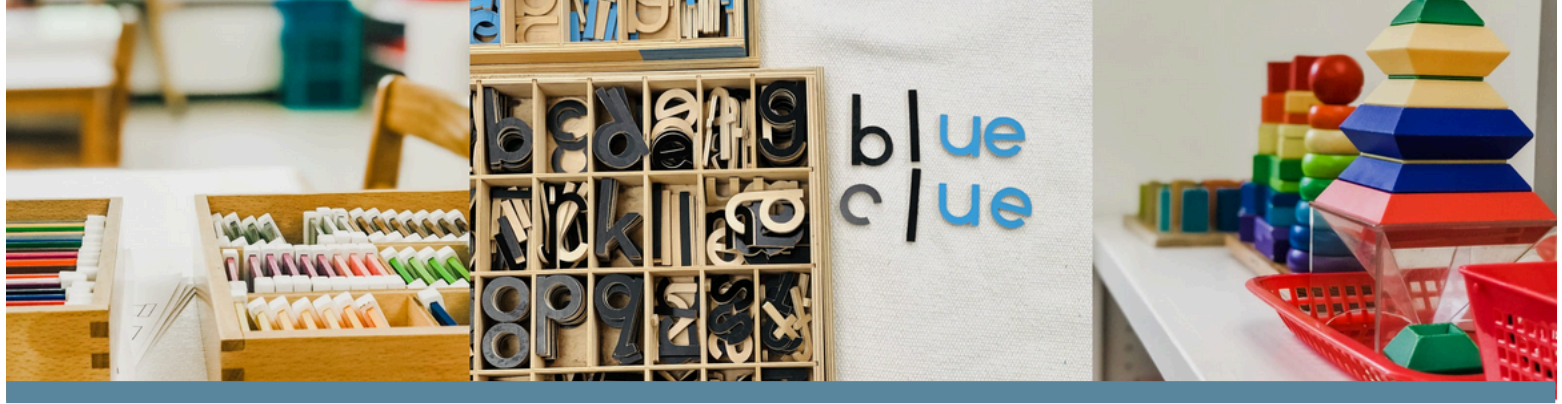




**HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH**





# At A Glance

***Our mission to celebrate each unique child — and to teach them to celebrate this in themselves and in others — supports our students to become confident, kind, and capable learners as they move from our nurturing, safe Harbor to the “wider open seas”.***



Position Start Date: July 1, 2026



65 Students, 25 Faculty/Staff



[www.theharborschool.org](http://www.theharborschool.org)



Day School 2 Year olds to Grade 3



11510 Falls Road, Potomac  
MD 20854



Application Deadline: February  
15th

## Academic

## Social-Emotional

## Physical



Our academic curriculum is both intellectually challenging and individually responsive to each child's developing learning style.



Our social emotional curriculum informs a child's evolving understanding of community, beginning in the early years with identity and friendship, and expanding to encompass the larger school community, care for our world, and service to others.



Our curriculum builds both fine motor and gross motor skills. Our holistic approach builds the fine motor skills necessary for success in prewriting and writing tasks.

Active Learning  
| Happens |  
| HERE |



# INTRODUCTION

The Harbor School, an independent, co-educational school designed for children in Preschool through 3rd Grade located in Potomac, Maryland is seeking their next Head of School starting July 1, 2026.

With over 50 years of experience in educating young children, Harbor's mission embraces the uniqueness of each young child. The school is devoted to teaching the students to celebrate their uniqueness in themselves and others. As the name suggests, the school is committed to providing a safe harbor for every child to flourish. Differentiated instruction and individualized attention allow each child to thrive and to reach his or her fullest potential. Active, cross-curricular learning occurs through play, exploration, and direct instruction with a child-centered approach. Harbor prides itself on the close and accessible relationships fostered with all families.

The Harbor School was founded in 1973 and is located in a beautiful facility on the grounds of Congregation Har Shalom, in Potomac Maryland though the school is not affiliated with the Temple. The campus features a 10,000 square foot educational building, 7,000-book library, large indoor multi use space with performance space, and outdoor playground. The Harbor School has an open admission policy and is intentional about a diverse community of learners and families.

The Harbor School is accredited by the Association of Independent Maryland Schools (AIMS). It is also a member of the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington (AISGW), the Washington Small Schools Association (WSSA) and the Parents Council of Washington (PCW).







# HARBOR'S NEXT LEADER

## THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

The next Head of School at Harbor School will join an environment dedicated to excellence in early childhood education and a community that values discovery, individualized learning, and celebrating the unique identity of every young child. The Head will lead this independent, co-educational school, serving children in Preschool through 3rd Grade, with an innovative and inspiring vision for contemporary early childhood education.

An experienced educator well-versed in current research, the next Head will invite the faculty and administration to look critically at the program, advancing an innovative early childhood curriculum and leveraging modern pedagogies. As the intellectual, interpersonal, and administrative leader for Harbor, the Head will model the school's values and manage all aspects of the school, including the academic program, operations, and financial health, as well as external relations and fundraising. The Head is responsible for building trust among all stakeholders and bringing clarity and transparency to decision-making and communication. In partnership with the Board of Trustees, the Head is responsible for setting the school's strategic priorities and for articulating and actualizing a compelling educational vision.

The next Head of The Harbor School steps into leadership at a pivotal moment, with a strong fifty-plus year foundation, a highly esteemed educational model, and a clearly articulated five-year strategic roadmap. The Harbor School's enduring mission is to embrace the uniqueness of each young child and nurture confident, kind, and capable learners through a holistic approach.

# STRATEGIC SNAPSHOT

The next Head of School will be a strategic, community-focused leader tasked with preserving this powerful educational model while strategically addressing institutional infrastructure, market visibility, and financial sustainability for the school's next fifty years.

## I. Notable Strengths

- The community survey overwhelmingly affirmed the qualitative strengths of The Harbor School, which define its identity and must be preserved and built upon.
- Individualized and Whole-Child Focus: The highest-rated strength is the close student-teacher relationships fostered by small class sizes and low student-to-teacher ratios. This allows for genuine individualized instruction and attention to the whole child, meeting the unique needs of every learner.
- Exceptional Faculty and Staff: The community highly values the wonderful, high-quality teachers and staff who implement the curriculum and create a safe, supportive learning environment.
- Tight-Knit Community and Mission: The school is celebrated for its strong sense of community and school spirit. The school's identity and mission are strongly felt and lived through daily interactions, making it a "tight-knit community" where children feel seen, known, and supported.
- Distinctive Program: The amazing, progressive curriculum, notably the highly anticipated and beloved Spiral Curriculum, is a hallmark that anchors the school's experiential and hands-on philosophy.
- Social/Emotional Expertise: The integration of Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) through programs like Responsive Classroom and Zones of Regulation ensures students develop essential self-advocacy, critical thinking, and social awareness skills.

## II. Opportunities and Challenges

The next Head of School will be responsible for leading the execution of the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan while mitigating several pressing operational and market challenges identified by the community.

### A. Opportunities

- Re-Articulating the Brand and Value: There is a significant opportunity to develop a comprehensive marketing and enrollment management strategy that clearly and broadly communicates the value of Harbor's specialized program. The goal is to aggressively establish Harbor's presence as a leading, high-quality early education option in Potomac, attracting new families and dispelling market misperceptions about the K-3 program focus.
- Advancing Financial Health: The school is poised to establish a robust development infrastructure, including creating a comprehensive development plan and alumni network. This is the critical moment to lead the effort to build a meaningful endowment to ensure long-term stability and growth.
- Further Invest in Teaching Growth: An opportunity exists to further the current substantive investment in a professional development program that further elevates the faculty's expertise in differentiated teaching and best practices related to the growing population of children with exceptional behavioral or neurodiverse needs.

# STRATEGIC SNAPSHOT

## B. Challenges

- Enrollment and Retention: As with many small schools, an ongoing challenge is unpredictable enrollment and stable interest across the grades. Improving enrollment is directly tied to financial sustainability.
- Supporting today's range of learners: As schools grapple with supporting children where they are and responding to emerging learning challenges, Harbor will be weighing how to admit a range of learners while having the support staff to confidently meet the needs of all enrolled students.
- Finances: While enjoying financial stability with balanced budgets and long-term financial modeling in place, the Head and Board will continue to examine and explore ways to mitigate financial risk during uncertain times.

## III. Strategic Themes for the Next Head of School

- The 2023-2028 Strategic Plan outlines four primary areas. The next Head of School will need to integrate the urgent community challenges into the successful execution of those themes
  - Community and External Engagement: Aggressively develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and enrollment strategy to establish Harbor's presence as a leading program for early education. Simultaneously, establish a robust alumni network and development plan to drive long-term financial health.
  - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Operationalizing the tenets of a thriving community is an imperative. From systems to inter-personal interactions, the next Head will further perpetuate the conditions where self-expression and belonging is available to all members of the community.
  - Academic Excellence and Faculty Development: Fund and implement professional development that maximizes student learning and strengthens faculty ability to personalize instruction for a full range of learners, particularly those with exceptional needs. Cultivate community partnerships to enhance differentiated learning experiences.
  - Physical Learning Environment: Assess and creatively maximize the current physical space to best meet the needs of the program's offerings. Strategically plan for the school's accompanying space needs and facility vision, which is seen as essential for future growth and market perception.

# Academic Program

The Harbor School curriculum is fundamentally designed to embrace the uniqueness of each young child, nurturing them into confident, kind, and capable learners through a holistic, research-based, and inquiry-driven approach. The school's academic framework is built upon the principle that learning is most impactful when it is interdisciplinary, contextual, and fueled by student curiosity.

## Foundations of the Curriculum: Inquiry, Standards, and Pedagogy

The curriculum is structured around inquiry-based, interdisciplinary, thematic units that allow students to create meaning and build skills within the context of topics of genuine interest to them. Projects are frequently initiated by the students themselves and integrate subjects like reading, writing, math, social studies, and science in meaningful ways.

The school is committed to a developmentally appropriate educational path, tailoring the academic, social/emotional, and physical curriculum to each individual through small group and individualized instruction.

- **Academic Alignment:** For Kindergarten through Grade Three, language and math learning is aligned with the Common Core standards. Science and Social Studies units throughout these grades are aligned with the Next Generation Science standards and the AERO standards, respectively. Preschool and Junior Kindergarten standards have been carefully developed and refined using the MSDE Early Learning Standards.
- **Core Pedagogical Resources:** The program does not rely on a single resource, instead utilizing a variety of resources to ensure a balanced, research-based methodology.
- **Reading:** Resources include Orton Gillingham, Reading and Phonics Workshop, Fountas and Pinnell, and Kids A to Z.
- **Writing:** The program utilizes Writing Workshop, Words Their Way, and Handwriting Without Tears.
- **Mathematics:** Core resources are Everyday Math, Contexts for Learning, and Dreambox.
- **Growth Mindset and Maker-Centered Learning:** A growth mindset is central to the teaching philosophy, where students learn that mistakes are valuable opportunities for growth. Teachers integrate maker-centered learning across all subjects to build skills in creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. The school's unique design cycle for young learners is summarized as: Explore. Create. Iterate..
- **Each grade level (Preschool through 3rd Grade)** explores four or five grade-specific thematic units designed to balance learning outcomes across all subjects. Teachers develop essential questions for each unit to frame student inquiry.
- **Learning In Action:** Students in each class take their learning in a different direction based on their interests, integrating grade-level skills and subject areas. Examples of past themes include "Take Flight," "Nautical Explorations," "Inventions and Inventors," and "Under the Sea".
- **Social/emotional development** is a central curriculum goal. The school uses several integrated resources and approaches:
- **Core SEL Resources:** Support is provided through Responsive Classroom training for teachers, the Zones of Regulation, and the explicit teaching and practice of Mindfulness.
- **Well-being Integration:** Sensory and movement breaks are incorporated into the school day, both for the whole class and on an individual basis when needed.

**DEI Commitment:** Diversity of thought, perspectives, and backgrounds is highly valued. Topics of identity, social justice, and equity are explored in developmentally appropriate ways, integrated through the curriculum and a responsive approach. The Social Justice Standards from Learning for Justice are integrated across the curriculum to promote awareness, understanding, and the confidence to self-advocate for a fair and just community. A deep commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is core to the mission, with ongoing professional development, the adoption of social justice standards, and an annual tradition—the Celebration of Culture—fostering an inclusive environment. This foundational excellence positions The Harbor School as an area leader in early childhood education.



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE

## Desired Leadership Attributes

The community survey identified the following professional experiences and personal characteristics as most important for the next Head of School:

## Professional Experiences

- Demonstrated success in Enrollment and Marketing: Experience successfully increasing enrollment, defining brand, and communicating value in a crowded independent school market.
- Financial and Advancement Acumen: Proven success in fundraising, development planning, financial modeling, and building an endowment.
- School Leadership and Management: Direct experience in and/or leading a school of a comparable size and complexity, with demonstrated success in strategic planning and implementation.
- Curriculum and Student Support Expertise: Experience with developmentally appropriate, differentiated curriculum, and a working knowledge of best practices for supporting neurodivergent children and managing behavioral challenges.
- Evidence of a depth of understanding and professional support for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion with children and adults.

## Personal Characteristics and Qualities

- Visionary and Growth-Oriented: A driven and innovative leader who can clearly articulate a vision for the school's next chapter and lead a significant growth effort.
- Excellent Communicator and Listener: Highly collaborative, approachable, accessible, and transparent, with the ability to effectively engage the Board, faculty, and parent community.
- Business Acumen: Possesses the financial and operational mindset necessary to ensure a financially sustainable model and lead facility development.
- Educational Presence: A leader who is genuinely present in the instructional life of the school, spending time in classrooms and deeply understanding the needs of teachers and students.
- Mission-Driven: A passionate advocate for the whole-child, individualized, progressive educational mission of The Harbor School.





# POTOMAC

## *Maryland*

The community of Potomac, Maryland, is situated in the heart of Montgomery County—an area renowned for its affluence, natural beauty, and direct connection to the cultural and economic power of the nation's capital. Residents enjoy an exceptional quality of life with access to expansive parks, including the dramatic waterfalls and gorges of Great Falls Park (Maryland side) and the historic towpath of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. The nearby village centers offer sophisticated local dining, boutique shopping, and a refined suburban atmosphere that balances tranquility with convenience.

As part of the greater Washington D.C. metropolitan area, Potomac is strategically positioned near one of the world's leading hubs for innovation, policy, and commerce. Montgomery County, often referred to as 'BioHealth Capital,' is home to a thriving Life Sciences and Biotechnology sector, along with major federal institutions such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). This concentration of research, government, and technology jobs ensures a dynamic and highly educated local parent body, providing unparalleled opportunities for collaboration and community engagement.

The area surrounding Potomac is distinguished by a remarkably strong independent and private school community. Over a dozen highly-regarded independent schools, including institutions like the Bullis School, Connelly School of the Holy Child, The Heights School, and St. Andrew's Episcopal School, operate in close proximity. These schools collectively contribute to a robust, competitive, and innovative educational landscape. The high percentage of students attending private institutions underscores the community's deep commitment to educational excellence and choice.

The region's heritage is richly preserved and deeply connected to the arts. A cultural beacon in the community is the Glenstone Museum, a unique private institution that seamlessly integrates post-World War II art, architecture, and landscape into a contemplative visitor experience. Furthermore, the historic Clara Barton National Historic Site is a short drive away, offering a profound link to American humanitarian history. Potomac's central location provides effortless access to three major airports (DCA, IAD, BWI) and the vast array of museums, theaters, and national landmarks in downtown Washington, D.C., positioning it as an ideal and accessible destination for executive leadership.



# For CONSIDERATION

## How to Apply:

Candidates interested in the position must submit the following materials in a SINGLE merged PDF document in the exact order below by January 9th, 2026.

- EC Candidate Summary Sheet (You'll be asked to make a copy before completing)
- Cover Letter addressed to: Harbor School Search Committee that speaks to "Why Harbor and why now?"
- Most current Résumé
- Statement of effective leadership for an Early Childhood program
- A list of five professional references: Name, email and phone contact, and relationship
- EC Disclosure Form (You'll be asked to make a copy before completing)

Send applications via email to André Withers

Email: [awithers@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:awithers@educatorscollaborative.com)

## Search Calendar

The following are projected dates

- Applications Due: January 9, 2025
- Semifinalist Interviews (Virtual): Early to Mid February
- Finalist Campus Visits and Interviews
  - Late February 2026
- Announcement: Early March 2026
- Start Date: July 1, 2026

## Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and benefits are competitive and commensurate with experience and qualifications. Harbor School offers a comprehensive benefits package including a 403(b) retirement plan with employer matching excellent insurance coverage and meaningful support for ongoing professional growth. Total compensation will be commensurate with the responsibilities of the role and the candidate's potential to contribute to the school's longterm success.



**EDUCATORS COLLABORATIVE**  
SEARCH, TRANSITION, AND STRATEGY