



RAVENSCROFT®



INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

Head of Upper School Search • Beginning July 2027

PREPARED BY Lisa Lyle, Partner



EDUCATORS
COLLABORATIVE

About Ravenscroft



Founded in 1862, Ravenscroft is a PreK–12 independent day school with 1,260 students on a 145-acre wooded campus in North Raleigh, in the heart of North Carolina's Research Triangle. The school grew from a downtown Raleigh parish school, moved to its current campus in the late 1960s, and graduated its first Upper School class in 1973. Today it is regarded as one of the leading PreK–12 independent schools in the Southeast..

Derrick Willard became Ravenscroft's 15th Head of School in July 2024. Liz Helfant joined his team in 2025. As the Associate Head of School for Academic Affairs, Liz oversees the academic program across all three divisions, and the Heads of Lower, Middle, and Upper School report to her.

Alongside strong academic, athletic, and artistic programs, Ravenscroft is committed to student health and wellness and to citizen leadership. **Lead From Here**, the school's leadership framework, developed through an exclusive partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership, builds competencies such as collaboration, accountability, strategic thinking, and empathy from the earliest grades.

Inspired by the Lead From Here program and the Portrait of a Graduate, Ravenscroft's updated mission statement is:

*Cultivating purposeful leaders
through challenge, collaboration, and innovation.*

Ravenscroft's Strategic Priorities: Leading What's Next

Ravenscroft's new strategic plan, **Leading Beyond**, builds on the school's longstanding commitment to academic excellence, character development, and community while positioning it to meet the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing world. Organized around five interconnected priorities, the plan seeks to deepen student learning, develop purposeful leaders, invest in exceptional educators, extend learning beyond campus, and create spaces that support innovation and discovery.

The Ravenscroft Campus



Ravenscroft at a glance	
Founded	1862
Enrollment	About 1,260 students, PreK–12
Campus	145 acres in North Raleigh
Employees	271
Students of color	35%
Faculty of color	24%
Teaching faculty with advanced degrees	71%
Students receiving financial aid	19% (\$3.8 million awarded)
Annual operating budget	\$40 million
Endowment	\$30 million

The Upper School



The Upper School serves more than 470 students in grades 9–12. Its college-preparatory program pairs a core sequence in English, mathematics, world languages, laboratory science (biology, chemistry, and physics), and history and government with honors and Advanced Placement options and a growing menu of electives in the junior and senior years. Juniors and seniors may design an independent study with a faculty member, and students can pursue Ravenscroft's International Diploma through the school's global education program. Classes meet on an eight-day rotating schedule.

Support for every student. Each student has a faculty advisor, and the advisory curriculum includes Lead From Here lessons, guidance on course selection, and informal mentoring. Grade deans follow each class, the Learning Enrichment and Advancement Program (LEAP) supports students with learning differences, and a four-year college counseling program begins in ninth grade with individual attention for every student and family.

Deep engagement for each student. Students choose from dozens of student-led clubs, participate in the Dialogic Campus initiative, coursework in entrepreneurship and global travel opportunities. The work of the Innovation, Design and Engineering team and the Keim Center for Innovation and Research offer additional challenges. Just this year, Ravenscroft became a RoundSquare member school, an internationally diverse network of more than 300 like-minded schools in 50 countries on six continents that connect and collaborate to offer world-class programmes and experiences, developing global competence, character, and confidence in students. Ravenscroft competes in the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association, fielding roughly 30 high school teams, and more than 80 percent of students in grades 7–12 play a school sport. The arts program performs in the 454-seat Christina B. Jones Theatre and a black-box theatre, with offerings from strings and choral music to visual art and stagecraft.



Recent recognition. This fall, three members of the Class of 2027 were named National Merit Semifinalists, and eight students were named Commended Scholars.

Strengths of the Upper School Experience

Ravenscroft's Upper School pairs genuine academic challenge with a community where every student is known. Students, parents, faculty, and administrators describe the same core strengths, and they ask the next Head of Upper School to protect them.

A community where students are known. Small classes and close relationships between students and adults sit at the heart of the Upper School. Parents tell story after story of a teacher, advisor, or coach who noticed what their child needed and acted on it, and teachers know students well enough to write recommendation letters that truly describe them. Faculty take particular pride in the broad middle of the student body: students who might get lost in a larger school are seen, challenged, and thrive here.

| *"I feel like here no student is lost... there's somebody always looking out." — Grade dean*

Academic excellence and preparation for what comes next. Families choose Ravenscroft for its rigor, and students take pride in challenging classes. Parents describe rigor as more than content: students learn to connect ideas across disciplines, present their thinking, and work with others, and graduates arrive at college ready to manage their time and work closely with professors. Course pathways run from

foundational levels through multivariable calculus, and personalized college counseling that begins in ninth grade is a distinctive strength; seniors call it one of the most valuable programs in the school.



A well-rounded experience with real stakes. Ravenscroft is not defined by a single program, and families see that balance as a strength. Every season offers a no-cut team from JV through varsity, and students can find a place onstage or behind the scenes in the arts every semester. Upper School students act as ambassadors beyond campus: string players perform professionally across the region, and student Dialogue facilitators are invited to lead conversations at other schools and universities.

A collaborative faculty trusted as professionals. Committed, high-quality teachers are among the most valued features of the school. Faculty prize the trust and latitude to teach in the ways they find most effective, and department suites, a faculty mentoring program, and open doors mean new teachers know they can ask any colleague for help. Many faculty have grown into leadership here, from teacher to dean to division leader.



"I can go to any of these teachers during a block we have free, and I can ask a question, and I don't feel intimidated to do that." — Early-career teacher

Values of care, integrity, and belonging. The community describes a culture grounded in respect, integrity, and care, and it runs through the adults: the Upper School leadership team describes a group where every voice is heard, disagreement is welcome in the room, and colleagues cover for one another. Faculty and students value the school's commitment to diversity and inclusion, and most students report feeling safe and well treated by adults and peers.

"I believe that we truly have a supportive community of kindness, which makes me very happy." — 12th grader

Momentum and investment. The Upper School is part of a school in motion. A new strategic plan, a preK–12 effort to align curriculum and standards, a multiyear commitment to bring faculty compensation to benchmark, a new Director of Athletics and a new Director of Fine Arts, and a new student "teams" program already building spirit across grades give the next Head real support to build on.

Opportunities for Growth and Development

The next Head of Upper School arrives at a moment of transition, with a strong foundation and a clear mandate through the new strategic plan. The community's hopes converge on a first priority, a stable and thriving faculty, and on a leader who can set priorities, pace change, and explain the why.

Articulate a compelling vision for the Upper School. Many feel the Upper School has strong programs but no single through line. Families, especially those of current eighth graders, want to understand how the Upper School works, from course placement and pathways to college outcomes. The next Head will name what makes a Ravenscroft Upper School education distinctive, show how its emphasis on character and leadership serves the outcomes families care about, and make the Upper School the clear first choice for Middle School families.

Lead thoughtfully on AI and technology. Parents and faculty see artificial intelligence as both the greatest challenge and a significant opportunity of the coming years. Faculty say that they need guidance beyond the current acceptable-use guidelines. The community seeks an Upper School-wide approach to AI literacy, ethics, and pedagogy that preserves critical thinking and human connection and gives teachers real support.

Strategically design and elevate a future-facing curriculum. The strategic plan calls for developing innovative pathways that foster student passion and purpose. Build on faculty expertise and autonomy through shared expectations for coursework, assessment, and feedback, while ensuring purposeful learning sequences and equitable course placement.

Renew Advisory and Lead From Here. The school believes deeply that leadership can be taught, and the strategic plan calls for a schoolwide refresh. In the Upper School, students want less instruction about leadership and more practice of it: experiential learning, explicit connections to daily life, and culminating opportunities such as capstones, internships, and leading work in the wider community.

Attract, develop, and retain an exceptional faculty. Every constituency named this its top priority, and the Head of School calls hiring the most important work of the division. The next Head will recruit proactively, building pipelines and partnerships rather than waiting for applicants, and will hire teachers who are excited about where the school's teaching and learning are headed. They will strengthen mentoring and induction, stand behind new colleagues with families, give particular attention to retaining faculty of color, and make the Upper School a place where great teachers want to build a career.

Partner with families through proactive, responsive communication. Parents want to know what is happening in the Upper School and why. They ask for timely responses, a clear path to the right person, and more chances to connect with leadership.

Leadership Profile

Ravenscroft seeks an experienced Upper School leader who pairs deep care for people with clarity and conviction. The community hopes for someone who knows every student by name, earns the trust of faculty and families, and sets clear expectations and maintains them.

The Role

The Head of Upper School leads a division of more than 470 students in grades 9–12 and reports to the Associate Head of School for Academic Affairs. The Head works closely with the Associate Head of School for Student Affairs, whose portfolio includes counseling, learning support, health and wellness, and partners with the Lower and Middle School division heads. The Head leads the Upper School leadership team and grade deans, and college counseling reports to the Head of Upper School.

Professional Experience

The ideal candidate will bring:

- Significant experience in upper school education and a genuine love for adolescents, ideally in an independent school
- A record of successful divisional or school leadership, including leading meaningful change from assessment through implementation at a pace people could sustain
- Demonstrated success recruiting, developing, mentoring, and retaining diverse and talented faculty, including teachers early in their careers
- Classroom teaching experience that earns credibility with faculty, and a current understanding of best practice across disciplines
- Experience building curricular alignment, common standards, and consistent assessment practices while preserving teachers' creativity
- Experience building and empowering high-performing teams, delegating to deans and department chairs, and leading programs from planning through implementation
- Experience supporting student well-being, belonging, adolescent development, and students with learning differences
- The ability to translate a vision into an executable plan, including budget, staffing, and hiring
- Familiarity with the college admissions landscape and an ability to partner with college counseling
- Perspective gained from strong schools beyond Ravenscroft; formal leadership preparation is valued

Leadership Attributes

- **People-first.** Sees the person behind every role, invests in colleagues' growth, and welcomes candid disagreement without holding it against anyone
- **Clear and decisive.** Sets high standards for students and adults, makes difficult decisions, says no when needed, and follows through
- **Strategic and organized.** Sees both the forest and the trees, sets and sequences priorities over several years, and builds reliable systems
- **Transparent.** Listens carefully, explains the reasoning behind decisions, and communicates proactively and responsively with students and families
- **An advocate and a bridge.** Represents the Upper School's needs to senior leadership, weighs the real cost of new initiatives, and once decisions are made, speaks with one voice
- **Accountable without micromanaging.** Gives faculty agency within clear expectations and holds every constituency to them fairly

- **A champion of the Upper School.** Tells its story with conviction to current and prospective families
- **A learner first.** Takes time to understand Ravenscroft's culture and people before making changes

Personal Attributes

- **Integrity.** Strong ethics and values, modeled every day
- **Visible and approachable.** At carpool, at lunch, in classrooms and faculty suites, at games and performances alike; easy for students, parents, and colleagues to reach
- **Warm and genuine.** Cares about students and colleagues as people, with a good sense of humor
- **Emotionally intelligent and steady.** A calm presence under pressure and through loss or transition; emotional intelligence matters as much as intellect
- **Confident and humble.** Willing to step out front and take a stand, while sharing credit freely
- **Committed to equity and belonging.** Ensures every student and adult feels known and heard, and that the school's commitment to diversity is lived daily
- **Energizing.** Brings joy and school spirit, letting traditions grow authentically rather than imposing them
- **In it for the long term.** Eager to build something lasting at Ravenscroft rather than seeking a stepping stone.



Timeline

Date	Milestone
October 25, 2026	Initial application deadline
November 2–3, 2026	Semifinalist interviews (online)
November 11–12, 16–17, and 18–19, 2026	Finalist campus visits, beginning late afternoon on Day 1 and running through 6 p.m. on Day 2
Before Thanksgiving break, or early December 2026 if more time is needed	Anticipated appointment

Application Process

Given the tight schedule, interested candidates should reach out right away to Lisa Lyle, Search Consultant and Partner at Educators Collaborative, to learn more. It will help to begin assembling application materials as a single PDF that includes:

- EC Candidate Summary Sheet (Lisa will provide this form on request)
- A letter of interest addressed to Liz Helfant, Associate Head of School for Academic Affairs, and Members of the Search Committee
- A current résumé
- An educational leadership philosophy statement (or another writing sample in response to a prompt of your choice)
- A list of five professional references, with a brief description of your working relationship with each and their email and phone contact information
- EC Disclosure Form (Lisa will provide this form on request)

Lisa Lyle, Partner, Educators Collaborative

llyle@educatorscollaborative.com

Listing date: September 30, 2026

Equal Opportunity Employment Statement

Ravenscroft welcomes people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs. We are committed to creating an environment of respect for our faculty, staff and students. Ravenscroft is an Equal Opportunity Employer with a policy of nondiscrimination for applicants and employees. We make employment decisions based on the qualifications of each applicant. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national or ethnic origin, age, veteran status, or the presence of disability.