



POSITION STATEMENT FOR HEAD OF SCHOOL

OAKTON, VA · JULY 2022

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of each year, Flint Hill “Lifers,” (seniors who have attended the School since junior kindergarten or kindergarten) light a lantern that sits in the headmaster’s office to symbolize the School’s entrepreneurial spirit, a profound belief in human potential, and a commitment to continual improvement. Flint Hill provides a superior education to 988 students from JK through 12th grade. Located in burgeoning Fairfax County, Flint Hill has emerged as a leading independent school in Northern Virginia in a relatively short amount of time. Eschewing the cookie-cutter approach to education, Flint Hill helps students find their unique potential, believing that all children learn in their special ways. The School’s commitment to students is embodied in the “Husky” and a driving spirit to be better together. The School believes fervently in the power of collaboration and hard work to help students lead meaningful lives. Vibrant, positive, and unbounded by tradition, Flint Hill is poised to “blaze new trails” as it seeks its next head of school.

Flint Hill was founded in 1956 as a proprietary school and after some period of turmoil in the 1980’s, was reorganized by Mr. Til Hazel. With Mr. Hazel’s vision and leadership, the School became a nonprofit with a self-perpetuating governing Board of Trustees. Rapid growth in the early 2000’s, facility expansion and program enhancement are a testament to the School’s impact in Northern Virginia. Today, Flint Hill has three buildings on two campuses and attracts students from across many zip codes, including some in Maryland.



MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Flint Hill's mission is lived by faculty, administrators and staff. It states:

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.

The mission is on display every school day. Four-year-old students begin computer science; Lower and Middle School students benefit from a robust social-emotional learning program that teaches conflict resolution, resilience, listening skills, and more; Advanced Placement courses provide Upper School students with the chance to stretch academically; the School boasts an award-winning robotics program and is an Apple Distinguished School. At the same time, it annually wins local and state Latin competitions. Undergirding this expansive program is a belief in the importance of relationships as a necessary foundation for student growth. Upper School students praised the availability of teachers when they needed extra help. One student stated, "I know I can go to an adult on campus if I have a problem." Six trained counselors serve all students and speak to the School's commitment to the whole child. With this secure foundation in relationships and a deep feeling of acceptance, students can live the School's core values:

- *Respect and value all equally.*
- *Lead and support with compassion.*
- *Act with integrity.*
- *Imagine what's possible.*
- *Blaze the trail.*

Supported by faculty, Flint Hill students are unafraid to ask questions in class, try out a new activity and advocate for themselves. The Flint Hill culture reinforces the School's vision: Take meaningful risks. Be yourself. Make a difference.

Articulate, confident and poised students are a testament to the power of this realized vision.

PROGRAM AND FACULTY

The Lower and Middle Schools at Flint Hill reflect a forward-thinking, developmentally appropriate approach to educating students. Both divisions focus on the whole child with particular knowledge and understanding of these respective age groups. Students learn not only how to solve problems but also how to collaborate. They work in groups on multiple projects, coming to appreciate the joy of learning. The Lower School has adopted Project Zero practices and provided professional development in this methodology. Teachers embrace social-emotional learning as a key 21st century skill and are trained in Responsive Classroom. In both divisions, teachers set aside time to talk about students and strategize to help them develop the skills needed to be effective learners in the older grades. With a robust advisory system in the Middle School, it is impossible to fall through the cracks. Reflecting Flint Hill's innovative, creative, and whole-child approach to education, Lower and Middle School students participate in robotics, an array of arts classes, physical education and athletics.

The Upper School is by far the School's largest division with 560 students. Specifically, 40-50% of the 9th grade class are new students. Expectations increase for students in the Upper School, but teachers still practice differentiated instruction, capitalizing on students' learning styles to help them reach their potential. A full range of Honors classes exists for advanced students, and an impressive 25 Advanced Placement courses provide many students with an opportunity to push beyond the limits of a traditional high school curriculum. For the Class of 2020, 47 students were named AP Scholars, 22 were designated AP Scholar with Honor, 41 were awarded AP Scholar with Distinction and one was cited as a National AP Scholar. Graduates attend a wide variety of colleges including some of the most selective universities in the country. Students laud the emphasis on class discussion and active learning.

Beyond the classroom, Upper School students have numerous opportunities to deepen their passions. The Visiting Writers' Series, which started in 2019, gives Upper School students a chance to learn about the craft and creativity of professional writers. In recent years, the Science Department instituted the Science Research Symposium that allows Upper School students to present original research on complex scientific topics. Each year approximately 25 students participate in the program, honing both their research and presentation skills. The Learning Center provides additional support for students with documented learning challenges. Its forward-thinking approach to learning extends throughout the School and informs the up-to-date methodologies Flint Hill teachers utilize to advance student learning.

Flint Hill's extensive Fine Arts program includes drama, instrumental music, choral music, and dance, as well as ceramics, digital art, studio art, and photography. Understanding the importance of performance, the Fine Arts Department provides multiple venues for students to display their creativity. Art work is prominently displayed, and each spring the "Arts Jam" provides student musicians, actors, singers, and dancers the opportunity to perform.

The Athletics program offers a wide variety of interscholastic sports for Middle and Upper School students. Flint Hill has had a long tradition of athletic excellence including a National Basketball Championship in the 1980's and one of the top girls' volleyball programs in the country. Numerous championships in multiple sports are a source of school spirit and student pride. Twenty to thirty graduates go on to play sports in college, some to highly competitive Division I universities including University of Virginia, University of North Carolina, and Wake Forest University.

Flint Hill's faculty are by all accounts deeply committed to their students and dedicated to the mission of the School. Over 70% have advanced degrees and are true experts in their respective fields. Teachers know the developmental stages of their students, and they use that knowledge to help them grow as learners. Moreover, they fully embrace the whole-child approach to education — their forward-thinking approach to education means that Flint Hill students benefit from the latest research on pedagogy and curriculum development.

Particularly striking is the respect they have for each other. Teachers speak effusively about the talent and professionalism of their colleagues. They value the support and collaboration that define the faculty culture.

Of particular note is the diversity of the student body. Students of color represent 40% of the student population and celebrating this diversity, the School displays a flag for every country of family origin represented in the student body. To date over 115 flags are on display. The director of institutional equity and inclusion initiates and leads specific programs to ensure that the Flint Hill community is living its core value to "Respect and value all equally." The administration has earned accolades for making difficult decisions in support of the School's commitment to ensuring that all voices are heard and supported.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Flint Hill is governed by a Board of Trustees consisting of 25 members including the headmaster. The Board is organized by committees, each with a clear set of responsibilities. Committees are active, and most proposals emerge from these committees. Flint Hill has managed its finances well. The School has a long-term debt of approximately \$6 million and an endowment of \$5 million. The Board is justifiably proud of its recent capital campaign of \$20 million, which provided the funds for the construction of Peterson Middle School, a beautiful, spacious facility with state-of-the-art learning spaces and plenty of room for enrollment growth in the Middle School. The Board has completed many of the initiatives detailed in the 2015 strategic plan and will begin preliminary strategic planning in the spring.

The administration has been superbly led by John Thomas since 2005. John's affable demeanor, his authentic concern for the well-being of all members of the Flint Hill community, his visibility, and

his ability to model relationship-building as a defining quality of the School are recognized by all stakeholders. Indeed, John's leadership style has become synonymous with the culture of this young school. The headmaster is assisted by a talented group of three assistant heads: one for finance and operations, one for advancement, and one for signature and special programs. Each assistant head has extensive supervisory responsibilities and works closely with the rest of the Leadership Team to solve problems, chart paths, and provide counsel to the headmaster. Directors of the Lower, Middle and Upper Schools round out the Leadership Team and are given autonomy to lead and manage their respective divisions.

FLINT HILL SCHOOL'S STRENGTHS

For a school that is essentially 30 years old, Flint Hill is a stunning success story — a reflection of outstanding leadership and the “Husky” spirit. One would be hard pressed to find many schools in the country that could match the School's growth in enrollment, program and facilities in such a short period of time. Flint Hill can proudly point to many strengths but of particular note are the following:

- A warm, welcoming, compassionate community epitomized by Headmaster John Thomas, a true servant-leader. In the most recent accreditation report, the visiting team described the centrality of relationships at Flint Hill: “some schools feel like a community built on the back of a school; at Flint Hill it feels like a school built on the back of a community.” Most independent schools tout their emphasis on relationships, citing small classes and an advisor system. Flint Hill goes further, actively seeking to gain a deeper understanding of who their individual students are as multi-dimensional human beings.
- Impressive facilities for a school so young; the new Peterson Middle School is a game changer
- An experienced senior administrative team with complimentary skills that are used to fulfill the mission and enhance the School
- A strong Board of Trustees, generous with their time and expertise and understanding the principles of good governance
- The Learning Center, which provides academic support for students
- A dedicated faculty who model collaboration and actively support the students and each other
- A culture that signals to students that they can choose to be the people they want to be by giving them the freedom to explore, experiment, fail, and ultimately, discover their interests, passions and talents
- A spirit of innovation reflected in an award-winning robotics program, the coveted Apple Distinguished Award School designation, and the elimination of letter grades in the Lower School

- Robust arts, athletics and club programs that provide a myriad of opportunities for students to pursue their interests outside the classroom, develop an array of 21st century skills, and nurture their creativity
- Superb financial management

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Many of the challenges reflect Flint Hill's relative youth and as such, can easily be seen as opportunities to advance the School:

- An unfocused identity in the marketplace. Flint Hill can proudly point to many pockets of distinction, but when added together, these pockets don't quite cohere into a clear identity. The incongruence can be seen in various parts of the program, marketing, admissions, and culture.
- Management. As is the case with many young and rapidly-growing schools, Flint Hill's management structure, roles, responsibilities, systems, and practices are not always clear.
- Financial sustainability. As is the case with most independent schools, Flint Hill relies heavily on tuition revenue. Although the School's finances are healthy, swings in enrollment could present a risk to this healthy school.
- A competitive independent school market and a highly regarded public school system. The competition for a dwindling number of students in the Washington, D.C. area is intense, requiring constant attention to brand and the value proposition.
- The complexity of three divisions on two campuses. Pulling the divisions together given their physical separation to ensure that all three are pulling in the same direction is an on-going challenge requiring thoughtful systems of communication.

QUALITIES OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

A successful head of school requires many leadership and management skills. Given Flint Hill's culture, the expectations for the next head, and the School's challenges and opportunities, the following seem particularly relevant:

- A high EQ that allows the next head to connect with a variety of stakeholders, reflecting the culture of deep compassion and respect for all members of the Flint Hill community
- Management skills that lead to the clarification of roles, responsibilities, structures, and systems that result in a smooth-running school

- Communication skills that promote transparency (when appropriate) and convey what makes Flint Hill so special
- In partnership with the Board and the faculty, the capacity to build a shared strategic vision that once realized, will lead to a clearer, more focused identity in the market
- The capacity to manage change, understand timing and pace to ensure that there is broad stakeholder support before moving forward
- The capacity to partner with the Board of Trustees to raise funds for the continual advancement of the School
- The ability to inspire a talented group of educators with an academic vision for the School and the leadership and organizational skills to realize this vision

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested candidates may apply on the RG175 website: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>. To be considered, candidates must submit a cover letter detailing their interest in the School, a resume, and a statement of educational philosophy or personal statement. In addition, candidates must list five references with contact information. References will not be contacted without prior approval from the candidate.

Application Deadline: **June 10, 2021**

Semifinalist Interviews: **August 6-7, 2021**

Finalist Visits: **September 19-21, 2021**

September 26-28, 2021

October 3-5, 2021

For further information, please contact RG175 consultants Debbie Reed (dreed2014@gmail.com) or Tom Olverson (tomolverson@gmail.com).