

RYE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL FUTURE LEADERSHIP

INTERVIEW BASE

The Board of Trustees of Rye Country Day School is conducting a national and international search to identify its next Head of School. To that end, and to assist them in clarifying the opportunities and challenges the school will face, Deirdre Ling and John Mackenzie of Educators' Collaborative received input from more than 300 individuals during virtual listening sessions and by means of an electronic survey. Those interviewed and surveyed included faculty, administrators, staff, parents, trustees, alumni, and students. Based on this input and the impressions of the consultants, as well as input from the Board of Trustees, the following represents a summary of RCDS's strengths, the challenges it faces in the next three to five years, and the qualities and traits the trustees and the broader school community seek in the next Head of School.

STRENGTHS OF RCDS

Rye Country Day School is well-positioned for a leadership transition. The notable tenure of current Head of School Scott Nelson will conclude with the School in a strong and stable position. The next Head will inherit an institution buoyed by financial health, state-of-the-art facilities, honored traditions, a spirit of innovation, and a talented group of students and adults.

The following strengths were most frequently mentioned:

- A superior academic reputation that espouses a culture of continuous improvement and regular self-assessment, combined with the institutional support for initiatives that enrich students' academic and personal development.
- A core commitment to service, as evidenced in school programs and its motto: *Not for Self, but for Service.*
- Highly motivated students who not only succeed academically but also take advantage of the breadth of artistic, athletic, and co-curricular offerings that allow for the development of the whole child.
- A highly experienced, passionate, and dedicated faculty and staff who make sure that every student is valued and understood.
- A deep commitment to all aspects of diversity in its programs and in the recruitment of employees and students that is reflective of RCDS's aspiration to build an inclusive and welcoming community.
- Attractive, well equipped, and well-maintained facilities.
- Centrally located among many communities with strong independent school enrollment, RCDS is within walking distance of beautiful downtown Rye and the Metro-North commuter train station, which provides easy access to and from New York City.
- Ample financial resources built on tuition with a highly selective admissions picture, aided by a very healthy endowment and highly successful annual giving program.
- An ability to provide highly competitive compensation and benefits to employees, including support for an abundance of professional development opportunities.
- Highly engaged and supportive parent and alumni bodies.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Head of School at Rye Country Day School will face the unique situation of succeeding a predecessor who served for twenty-nine years and simultaneously helping a school transition from unprecedented circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic. In this context, the School will face challenges that are common to many independent schools, as well as some that are unique to Rye Country Day School at this point in its history.





The following will likely be the primary focus areas for the school and its next Head:

- Further refine the meaning of “academic excellence”.
 - ◆ Continue to differentiate between process and product and to evaluate the significance of external standardized measures of student learning as metrics of success.
 - ◆ Assess and evaluate the balance between innovation and tradition.
 - ◆ Determine the appropriate pace of change with due consideration for faculty/staff workload, viable educational trends, and most importantly, defining what kind of a school RCDS wants to be.
- Maximize the benefits of the PreK-12 continuum to enhance the sense of joy and warmth among the RCDS community and to better promote a “one school” feel.
- Assure that the School’s commitment to academic rigor is aligned with current learning regarding healthy social and emotional development. Continue to focus on the health and well-being of students and employees.
- Assure that the talents of the senior administrators and faculty are most fully utilized, strengthening team building with new and veteran leaders, and redefining reporting relationships.
- Continue progress with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
- Develop forward-looking plans about future property acquisition and its use, so as to best serve school programs, future enrollment objectives, and RCDS maintaining its place in a competitive market of other private and public school options.
- Assure that RCDS best utilizes available technology resources in a variety of areas, including teaching and learning, marketing, and data collection/record keeping.
- Find the right balance for communications with parents, faculty, and alumni, so that all constituents feel informed and there is ample transparency around decision making.
- Assess the effects of COVID-19 on best practices in teaching. Recognize and address the long-term social and emotional issues that affect the students, faculty and overall school community.



DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND ATTRIBUTES

The Board of Trustees seeks as the School's next leader an individual whose personal and professional attributes match the School's culture and who will provide effective leadership in the coming years. To best serve RCDS, the next Head of School will be someone who is:

- An experienced leader with the confidence to succeed a long-term, highly-respected, and successful Head of School, knowledgeable about best educational practices and trends, interested in pedagogy, and discerning about which innovative approaches would best serve RCDS.
- A community builder who is authentic, accessible, collaborative, resilient, good humored, and who inspires trust in the community.
- An attentive listener and skillful communicator, who values process and reflection, and has a nuanced approach to providing feedback.
- A champion of the faculty and staff who encourages them towards excellence, shepherds their professional development, celebrates their successes and hears their concerns, and who simultaneously holds them accountable to high expectations.
- A highly visible advocate for the School, who embraces and embodies RCDS's mission and traditions and effectively communicates them within the school and to the larger community.
- An empathetic consensus builder and unifier who looks for ways to build connection and find common ground.
- An educator who values and actively promotes a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion and effectively articulates RCDS's position on these principles.
- A skillful decision maker who thoughtfully assesses what is best about current practice, remains transparent about the decision making process, and does not shy away from adopting changes that serve RCDS's best interests.
- A leader with an executive mindset who can both "manage down" and "manage up," by creating an effective administrative leadership team with clear lines of responsibility and also by partnering with the Board of Trustees as it makes decisions for which it is responsible.
- A "systems thinker" who possesses a clear sense of how the various school functions (academic, co-curricular, financial, personnel, etc.) interconnect with one another.
- A person who evidences a passion for child and adolescent development and has a deep conviction for the lasting impact a school can have on students' lives.



SUMMARY OF THE SEARCH PROCESS

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials in one continuous Word or PDF document. The application deadline is July 15, 2021.

- Educators' Collaborative Candidate Summary Sheet and Disclosure Form (contact Deirdre Ling or John Mackenzie for those documents)
- Letter of Interest addressed to the Search Committee
- Current résumé
- Statement of Educational Leadership
- A list of five or more references with contact information (including phone numbers and email addresses)
- Up to three letters of reference (optional)

Please address any inquiries or expressions of interest to:

John Mackenzie, Partner, Educators' Collaborative, LLC
jmackenzie@educatorscollaborative.com, 614-207-1006

OR

Deirdre Ling, Partner, Educators' Collaborative, LLC
daling@comcast.net, 508-423-1605

