



The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools
Middle School Principal
Chicago, IL

Background

At the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (Lab), students in Nursery through Grade 12 experience a world-class educational journey.

Founded in 1896 by John Dewey as a place for educators to develop and explore novel approaches to pedagogy and curriculum, Lab continues to provide excitement and imagination in learning to this day.

Academic rigor, experiential learning, and intellectual discourse are hallmarks of a Lab education. Lab educators

are recognized for excellence in teaching and pride themselves on innovation in the classroom. Students in every grade have access to unparalleled resources, and all members of the Lab community benefit by partnerships and connections with the University of Chicago. Families who choose Lab care deeply about curiosity, inquiry, and creativity.



No less than scholarship, Lab's mission prioritizes honoring diversity and exhibiting kindness. We are committed to building and supporting a teaching and learning community where young people see aspects of their backgrounds and identities reflected around them, where they feel a deep sense of belonging, and where they discover and use their voices to full effect.

Today, 53-59 percent of Lab's student body are students of color. Families report speaking nearly 40 different languages in their homes. Approximately 60 percent of Lab families are also affiliated with the University of Chicago. Half of our families live in Hyde Park, and the rest come from across Chicago, the suburbs, and northwestern Indiana. Inclusion is a fundamental value at Lab, such that we

celebrate every facet of community members' identities, and even where we disagree, we emphasize respect, civility, and maintaining a spirit of community.

Lab employs people with a wide range of skills and training in many different disciplines, who have in common a love of learning and the wish to inspire that same love of learning in young people. We seek candidates for employment who thrive in an educational environment. We provide a great professional home for those committed to collaboration, ongoing personal and professional growth, and cultivating positive relationships. We strongly encourage applications from candidates of color, LGBTQ+ identified candidates, candidates from historically marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds, and candidates with a demonstrated commitment to a deepening diversity, equity, and inclusion practice. In turn, we strive to ensure that Lab is a joyful, welcoming, and inspiring place to work. Through our connection to the University, faculty, staff, and administrators enjoy benefits and opportunities that would be nearly impossible to match in any other environment.

Position

Lab seeks a seasoned, visionary education professional and unifying community leader to serve as Principal of the Middle School (grades 6-8), effective summer 2024. The origin point of groundbreaking developments in teaching and learning including progressive education and Chicago Math, today the Laboratory Schools are home to the youngest scholars at the University of Chicago. As such, Lab provides a world-class education to over 2200 students from Nursery-3 through 12th Grade.



The Middle School division provides a stimulating and supportive journey of academic excitement, belonging and inclusivity, and social-emotional growth for 465 diverse, engaged students. Each week, a Middle School student will connect with almost a dozen teachers specializing in different areas, each with unique interests and styles. Our program balances independence and challenge with the support Middle Schoolers need, featuring overnight camping trips in grades 6 and 7, and building to grade 8 when students choose from a variety of elective courses and travel to Washington, DC. Extracurricular opportunities, including six interscholastic athletic teams and many clubs, are important parts of Middle School life. Our 62 outstanding Middle School teachers, 80% of whom hold advanced degrees, are adept at supporting students through this intense period of intellectual, social,

emotional, physical, and moral growth. Their expertise and support give students the confidence to discuss, question, and debate which then translates into creative, expressive, vocal intellects, and serves as a strong foundation for high school.

The unifying features of the Lab community, enshrined in our mission, are our commitments to scholarship, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity. The Middle School takes a whole-child approach, linking academic support with social-emotional learning and a commitment to equity, inclusion, and belonging. Lab is invested in providing support and resources for neurodiverse students. Our team of educators strive to provide an experience of inclusion and belonging for teens who identify with historically marginalized characteristics and backgrounds.



The division is located on Lab's Historic Campus, which features a 30,000-volume library, 13 wet science labs, six computer labs, a digital language lab, a 250-seat black box theater and 700-seat auditorium, cutting-edge art, recording, music, and digital media facilities, a gallery, three gymnasiums, outdoor athletic facilities, fully equipped athletic training facilities, and innumerable connections to the University of Chicago's resources and facilities.



The Principal — supported by an Assistant Principal, a Dean of Students, and administrative support professionals, and in partnership with faculty and department leaders — is responsible for the strategic direction, leadership, and daily oversight of Lab's Middle School, support of a talented faculty to further the development of their craft, and partnership with an engaged parent community. Reporting to the Associate Director of Schools (Lab's seniormost program officer), the Principal holds a senior administrative leadership position at Lab and actively partners with the 16-member leadership team to develop and provide broad strategic guidance for the Schools. The Principal is responsible for smooth day-to-day operations in the division as well as students' academic and social progress, professional growth of educators, positive community relations, and student health and well-being. The Principal will ensure the recruitment, hiring, evaluation, professional development, and retention of an excellent, diverse team of educators. They will oversee curriculum development in accordance with schoolwide strategic priorities. They will actively pursue

Lab's mission priority of honoring diversity, with attention to Lab's theory of action which links learning with diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as social-emotional growth. Based on strong relationships with students, families, faculty, and staff, a positive attitude and outlook, and a commitment to mission and collaborative problem-solving, the Principal will nurture the Middle School's sense of community.

The successful candidate for Principal will bring proven leadership experience, excellent academic credentials, strong emotional intelligence, and demonstrated success in fostering a climate of inclusion and belonging. Lab seeks a straightforward, courageous, and collaborative leader who is committed to listening and consensus-building.

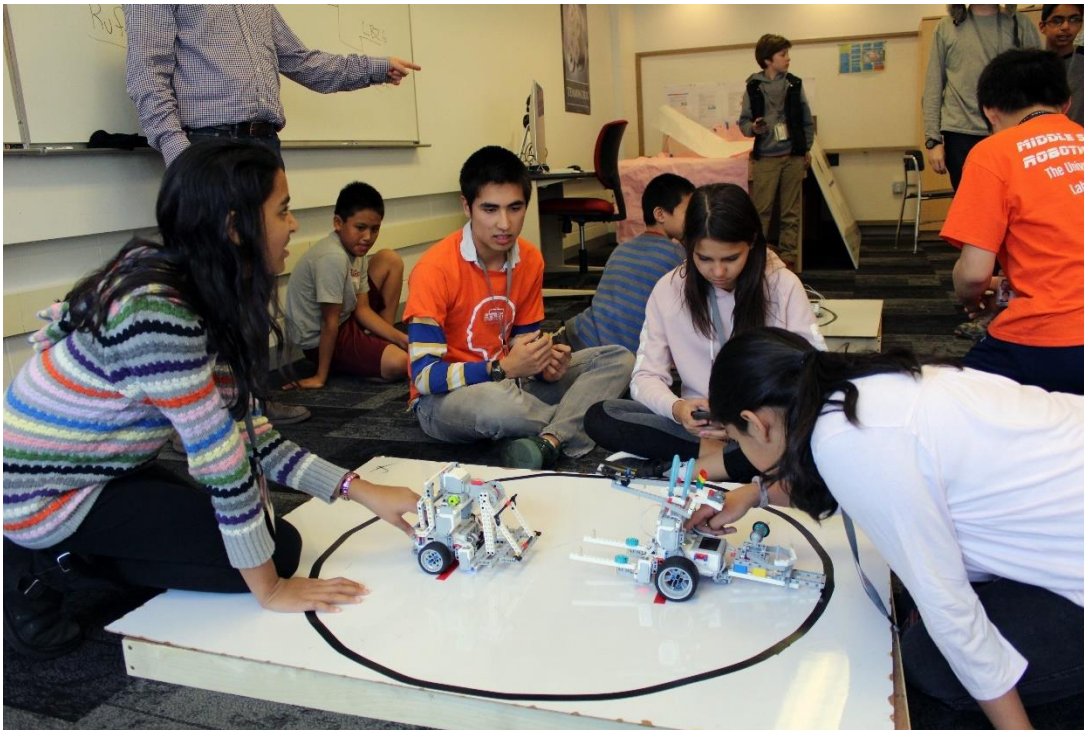


Responsibilities

- The Principal is responsible for all day-to-day activities in the Middle School, from the implementation of daily schedules and events to oversight of student conduct and health.
- The Principal provides supportive, collaborative leadership in a dynamic teaching and learning environment where a diverse team of faculty and staff are committed to the continuous improvement of program and curriculum. They oversee ongoing professional development of faculty and provide coaching and mentorship to individual teachers in relationships based on collaboration and partnership. They maintain a healthy and productive relationship with members of Lab's Faculty Association through consistent, responsible administration of the collective bargaining agreement.
- In furtherance of Lab's mission imperative of honoring diversity, the Principal is charged with advancing our aspiration of becoming an anti-bias, antiracist school, and works closely with Lab's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Director of Student Services, and Director of Equal Opportunity Services.
- The Principal serves on the schoolwide Academic Leadership Team and collaborates closely with the Early Childhood, Lower School, and High School principals and other senior program officers. They also serve on the schoolwide Senior Leadership Team,

ensuring the appropriate communication of Middle School successes and challenges to colleagues across all divisions and departments, adapting divisional work as appropriate to efforts in other parts of the school, and contributing to institutional decision making, leadership, and transparent communications.

- Through regular, direct communications with families, students, faculty and staff, appropriate events and programs, and the cultivation of both strong relationships and appropriate boundaries, the Principal fosters a healthy, positive community across the division.
- The Principal develops and implements the Middle School annual budget, provides sound oversight to ensure that finances support strategic priorities, and partners with various administrative colleagues on issues such as planning, programming, budgeting, and operational infrastructure.



Qualifications

Experience

- Master's degree in education or related field preferred;
- At least ten years of teaching experience, preferably in middle school/intermediate education;
- Direct experience working with children aged 11-14;
- At least five years of successful senior administrative experience, preferably in independent schools;
- Significant experience in creating, implementing, managing, and assessing educational programs;
- Demonstrable success promoting and supporting diversity, developing a culture of inclusion and belonging, and assessing and maintaining equitable systems and processes;
- Successful record of support for children and adults with diverse identities and backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, learning abilities, socio-economic status, language, and national origin;
- A broad understanding of middle school curricula and young adult learning;
- An abiding commitment to student health and wellness;
- Experience working in or with a unionized faculty covered by a collective bargaining agreement is preferred.



Skills

- Outstanding leadership and organizational skills;
- Robust, up-to-date understanding of best practices in middle school teaching and learning;
- A commitment to open discourse within the parameters of a middle school community and supporting teens as they prepare to participate in collegiate-level open discourse;
- Strong supervision, mentorship, and support skills to effectuate a productive, collegial, and efficient teaching and learning environment, oriented towards professional growth among divisional faculty and staff;
- Ongoing commitment to learning and growth in skills, issues, and competencies relevant to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and proven experience in developing

inclusiveness, a culture of belonging, and a structure of equitable practices in classrooms and communities;

- Facility with data-informed decision making;
- A student-centered approach to education administration;
- A sense of humor and joy in working with teens, their families, their teachers, and a school community;
- Agility, flexibility, creativity, and patience;
- A commitment to exhibiting kindness in all circumstances and to encouraging and eliciting kindness in others;
- Confidence and resilience;
- Strong analytical, problem-solving, and decision-making skills;
- Outstanding verbal and written communication skills;
- Robust empathy and emotional intelligence paired with outstanding interpersonal, diplomatic, and community-building skills;
- Ability to develop strong relationships while also maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and encourage the same in others;
- Capacity to manage and navigate the expectations of invested and aspirational students and families with grace, compassion, appropriate boundaries, and self-care;
- Creativity, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a strategic mindset.



Key Competencies

- **Communicates Effectively** – Developing and delivering multi-mode communications that convey a clear understanding of the unique needs of different audiences.
- **Manages Conflict** – Handling conflict situations effectively, with a minimum of noise.
- **Instills Trust** – Gaining the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity, and authenticity.
- **Values Difference** – Recognizing the value that different perspectives and cultures bring to an organization.
- **Manages Complexity** – Making sense of complex, high quantity, and sometimes contradictory information to effectively solve problems.
- **Decision Quality** – Making good and timely decisions that keep the organization moving forward.

Application Requirements and Search Process

DRG is conducting this search on behalf of The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. Interested candidates should submit, as soon as possible, materials including the following:

- A cover letter indicating why you are particularly interested in and qualified for the position.
- A current resume.
- Example of a recent communication.
- A list of five professional references to include name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted until the finalist stage of the search).

Application Status: Accepting Applications

Start date: Full-time year-round administrative appointment beginning July 1, 2024

This position description is based upon material provided by The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, an equal opportunity employer.

To apply for this position, please click [HERE](#).

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