



Middle School Head

Leadership Opportunity

NICHOLS SCHOOL



Buffalo, NY

585 students 5-12

www.nicholsschool.org

Carney, Sandoe & Associates

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• *The Search Group*

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THE POSTION

The Nichols School seeks a Middle School Head to guide and inspire the faculty and the almost 200 students who form its Middle School community (grades 5-8). As the pre-eminent independent school in western New York, Nichols enjoys a reputation for providing outstanding academics in a nurturing environment that supports students as they learn to balance classroom studies with artistic, athletic and co-curricular involvement. The mission statement, honor code and commitment to excellence provide the framework for students to develop as responsible, compassionate, confident and self-disciplined members of society. The next head of the Middle School will play a key role in the visionary leadership of this outstanding school. The Middle School is a warm, high functioning division, housed in its own building, with a faculty of 24, two of whom also serve as deans (grade 5-6 and grades 7-8). The current Middle School Head, John Munro, transitions this summer to assume the headship of Fairfield Country Day School.

THE SCHOOL

Founded in 1892 by William Nichols, Nichols is an independent, co-educational, non-denominational, college preparatory day school. The school is organized into two divisions: Middle School (Grades 5-8) and Upper School (Grades 9-12), with approximately 585 students and 70 faculty. Cultivating integrity and social concern, the school maintains a student-teacher ratio of 8:1 and an average class size of fourteen across both divisions.

A Nichols education is characterized by rigorous academics, enriching arts offerings and inclusive athletics. An honor code shapes student conduct and experiences across all grade levels. The school's core values are the pursuit of excellence, integrity of character, tradition and change, rigor and balance, and a diverse community. Every student in both the Middle and Upper School has a faculty advisor whose responsibility is to serve as the child's advocate, mentor, coach and teacher. Advisors and advisees meet daily, and advisors are also in close contact with a student's teachers and family. Middle School students wear a uniform while Upper School students observe a dress code.



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Over 20 Advanced Placement courses are offered at the Upper School level, and over 30% of seniors are typically accepted into early decision plans. Outside the classroom, students participate in 60 interscholastic sports across both divisions, and take advantage of a range of opportunities for student leadership in the dozens of clubs and activities available school-wide. Community service is required of all students at every grade level, and both independent study courses and cultural exchange programs are available in the Upper School.

Nichols is governed by a Board composed of 24 members which meets three times a year and additionally as needed, and the school awards over \$1.5 million in need-based financial aid each year. The school received national recognition in the Secondary School Recognition Program and Exemplary Private School Recognition Program. Nichols is accredited by the New York State Association of Independent Schools, the New York State Department of Education, and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools.

CAMPUS

Situated on 30 acres in North Buffalo, the campus is a collegiate-style city campus that features stately buildings in red brick designed by Buffalo architect E.B. Green, and spacious lawns dotted with lofty trees and colorful gardens. The campus consolidation project - completed in August 2001 - joined the middle and upper schools, allowing for each to have its own separate academic buildings and libraries while sharing dining, athletic, and performing arts facilities. In addition to the picturesque central quadrangle, the campus now comprises seven buildings linked by sidewalks and indoor passageways, in addition to the athletic and administrative support spaces. Facilities highlights include:



- The Flickinger Performing Arts Center, a superb, state-of-the-art space that includes a 480-seat auditorium as well as several new visual arts studios
- "The Pond," a centrally located community space in the Middle School for theatre productions and gatherings.
- The Scully Athletic Complex, featuring two gymnasiums and three international squash courts
- The Dann Memorial Ice Rink, which includes two rinks
- Five outdoor playing fields, including 2 field turf surfaces
- Five tennis courts



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- A fiber optic network and high-speed wireless Internet access across campus
- Five PC computer labs, and one Macintosh Arts/Digital Media lab
- Over 140 computers in both libraries, computer labs, Upper School common areas, and Middle School classrooms
- SMART Board technology in over 70% of all Middle and Upper School classrooms

The Nichols campus, just a few minutes from downtown, is nicely situated within easy walking distance of the Buffalo Zoo, Olmstead Delaware Park (across the street) and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Buffalo Historical Society, Burchfield Penney Art Gallery and Frank Lloyd Wright Darwin Martin House.

SETTING AND LOCATION

Buffalo is the second most populous city in New York State after New York City. Located in western New York on the eastern shores of Lake Erie and at the head of the Niagara River, the city evolved from its early years as a major port and railroad hub to become a sizeable manufacturing and industrial center. Today its civic and economic life are built around healthcare, higher education, and a successful small business community. While the city's more recent economic reputation has been characterized as challenging, recent investment in municipal development has been significant, and the quality of life has remained quite high. A significant portion of Buffalo's waterfront has been transformed from its industrial past into a focal point for social and recreational activity,



and the city was awarded the titles of third cleanest city, USA Today's "City with a Heart", and won the "All-America City Award" twice.

Many Nichols faculty who are not Buffalo natives, have discovered the area's extremely good quality of life. With exceptionally affordable housing prices, historically significant homes, excellent health care, and abundant recreational activities in every season, many cite with pride and some with surprise, that Buffalo offers a strong sense of



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community, provides a reassuring and supportive place to raise a family, and overall offers many professional and personal benefits.

Although Buffalo has the reputation nationally of harsh winters, in actuality, much of the heavy lake-effect snowfall in western New York bypasses the city and yet covers nearby ski areas with plenty of snow for winter recreation. A slightly longer winter season gives way to mild summers which are the sunniest and driest of any major city in the Northeast. Lake Erie sends cool breezes and only moderate humidity in the warmer months.

Buffalo is also home to a number of private and public colleges and universities, the largest of which is the University at Buffalo, part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. The city also boasts one of the largest zoos in America and The Tiff Nature Preserve (a 264-acre site for environmental education and conservation). Buffalo has a thriving theater scene, two nationally recognized art galleries, two professional sports franchises (the NFL Bills and the NHL Sabres). Minutes away from Niagara Falls, Buffalo is also just 100 miles from Canada's largest city, Toronto (pop. 5M+).

STUDENTS

Nichols students are much as you would expect – bright, energetic and engaged. Young people join the Nichols community from around the city and from over 40 surrounding towns and suburbs, including parts of southern Ontario, Canada. Approximately 30% of the student body receives the \$1.5 million need-based financial aid. Students are divided almost equally between boys and girls, both in the middle and upper Schools. Faculty feel the parents are particularly supportive as well.



FACULTY AND STAFF

Nichols School is committed to attracting and maintaining an outstanding faculty, recruiting teachers from around the country as well as internationally. On average, teachers at Nichols have over 19 years of teaching experience and embrace school responsibilities which include classroom instruction, student advising, coaching, and club sponsorship. Each academic department is chaired by one member of the Upper or Middle School faculty. The Chair is responsible for that particular discipline and curriculum grades 5-12. Faculty appreciate the degree of autonomy and support they are given by the school, with many doing creative work on their own and outside the school. A strong sense of continuity pervades



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this intelligent and compassionate group in which 85% have a master's degree, 10% have a doctorate; 14% of the faculty are Nichols graduates. 24 full-time teachers work in the Middle School and 22 of them teach there exclusively. Faculty describe the experience of working at Nichols as “an atmosphere which encourages collaboration,” where faculty are “VERY collegial across the board, with everyone getting along – across departments, and in athletics.”

ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

The Middle School years are a time of rapid change for any youngster. Nichols teachers recognize and understand the unique emotional, intellectual and developmental needs of pre-adolescents, and they work purposefully to create the kind of intentional environment young people need to thrive. Nichols faculty members encourage their students to take risks and try new experiences, whether in the classroom, on the athletic field or in the arts. They realize that informed decisions are insightful ones, and they nurture the young people in their charge with kindness and patience, supporting them as they overcome obstacles and challenging them as they cultivate new interests and talents.



The Middle School operates on a trimester system, and all coursework is created with an eye toward tapping into the natural curiosity of this age group in an attempt to foster a life-long love of learning. Integrated curricula at every grade level use interdisciplinary theme-based units and components of character education are interspersed regularly throughout the course of study. Extensive field trip and community service

experiences are incorporated into the school year, and students are exposed traditional, experiential and project-based teaching and learning. Students receive language instruction in Latin, French, Spanish and Chinese, in addition to a variety of visual and performing arts specialties. Moreover, all Middle School students are involved in sports each day by participating in a program that recognizes development differences among students. The Arts curriculum in the Middle School is comprised of Fine Arts, Music, Theatre and Computers and Technology. Arts courses are taught daily on a quarterly basis which permits the students to become immersed in a particular discipline on a consistent and regular basis.



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develop study habits and organizational skills while honing their abilities in critical thinking and writing.

In fifth grade students are introduced to the expectations, standards and philosophies of the school. The fifth grade Central Studies curriculum focuses on medieval England and is integrated thematically with science, math, music art and grammar/spelling. A portfolio assessment approach shapes the writing program. As students move into sixth grade and strive to become more independent, the program focuses on helping them

Seventh graders see a greater emphasis on organization and initiative, and they are asked to assume greater responsibility for their own learning both within and outside classroom. Field trip opportunities increase, as do co-curricular options in the areas of athletics and the arts. And finally, eighth graders act as school leaders, acquiring greater privilege and responsibility as they move through the transition from Middle School to Upper School. Academic requirements become more demanding, co-curriculars become more competitive, and students leave the Middle School feeling ready to meet the challenges presented by the high school environment. The current Middle School Head, John Munro, instituted a "House System," developed to support a sense of school spirit, camaraderie and community among the four middle school grades. Eighth graders are elected as "prefects" by their house at the beginning of the year and serve as Middle School leaders in community service efforts through the year.

Middle School students benefit from in-depth instruction, wireless Internet connectivity, and classrooms equipped with SMART Board technology. Athletic instruction includes the introduction to several team sports, use of the weight room and rock wall, as well as ongoing education in fitness and nutrition. Teams at the Middle School level include field hockey, modified football, soccer, ice hockey, basketball, lacrosse, tennis and baseball. Arts offerings include drama, music, digital arts, ceramics, band, string group, choral group and hand bells, and Middle School students also have the opportunity to participate in a variety of community service outreach programs. Class trips at the beginning of the year provide teachers and students with an opportunity to bond, develop and relationships in more informal surroundings.



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CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES of the POSITION

Part of role of the Middle School Head is to maintain the middle school identity and culture while taking maximizing the advantage of the a 5-12 structure where the middle and upper schools share a campus. Student and faculty feel the Middle School experience is both nourishing and working very well; all want that to continue. The Middle School is the doorway to the school and as such the Middle School Head plays an essential role in admissions, proving to families in Buffalo that independent education is worth the sacrifice and Nichols is the best option for their children. At this time, student attrition is low, enrollment is steady and community interest in Nichols is high.

Nichols Numbers:

Grades: 5-12

Enrollment: 585

Faculty: 73

*Faculty w/ Advanced Degree:
85%*

*Operating budget: \$11 M
Annual Giving: \$750K*

*Financial Aid: \$1.6M
Students Receiving
Aid: 30%*

*Endowment: \$20M
Campus size: 30 acres*

Opportunities for the new Middle School Head include:

- Clarify and sharpen curricular development for grades 5-12, especially in math and languages
- Modify the faculty evaluation process
- Insure balance among academic, athletics, and arts in the Middle School
- Determine the degree to which learning support is needed in the Middle School
- Become an important part of the school and the Buffalo community
- Continue a tradition of faculty creativity, program stability, and student enrichment.

QUALIFICATIONS

The Middle School has had very strong leadership over the last decade of John Munro's tenure. John's style has been collaborative, involved, and values-driven. He has stressed character, creativity and comporment among students, enjoyed excellent parent relations, and implemented a number of new programs. In the last few years he also assumed the title of Assistant Head of School. The Middle School has a positive, family-oriented culture which prizes trust, authenticity, transparency, respectfulness, and openness. Nichols School is seeking candidates who will fit well in this environment, and who can:



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- Provide inspirational and creative leadership to a successful, seasoned faculty
- Connect with kids and level with parents
- Make tough decisions while using an inclusive approach to decision-making
- Sustain a balanced educational experience for students
- Communicate clearly and often both inside and out of their organization

Organizational ability, poise, candor, integrity, enthusiasm, humor, and collegiality are needed, along with an advanced degree and some administrative experience.

COMPENSATION

Competitive with good benefits, comparable with other, major NAIS schools. Tuition remission available.

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically and as separate documents the following materials:

- *cover letter expressing interest in Nichols School*
- *current résumé*
- *statement of educational philosophy and practice*
- *list of 4 references with name, phone number, and email address of each to:*

Benjamin L. Bolté

Senior Search Associates

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