



Bethesda, Maryland

## Director of Middle School

### Introduction

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Located on a 57-acre campus in the rolling woodlands of Bethesda, Maryland, Holton-Arms School is an independent, college preparatory school enrolling 663 girls in grades three through twelve. Since 1901, the school has cultivated the unique potential of young women through the “education not only of the mind, but of the soul and spirit.” At Holton, students from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to speak their minds, to take risks, to learn from mistakes, to pursue opportunities for leadership, and to build lifelong friendships to help them lead lives of positive influence.

Holton-Arms is a vibrant community that values tradition as well as creativity and independence. The school provides challenging and dynamic programs in traditional academic areas, the fine and performing arts, and athletics, all of which work in harmony to build a well-rounded experience in support of the intellectual and emotional development of young women. The institution seeks to broaden girls’ potential and to provide limitless opportunities to excel in all areas, and the school motto, “I will find a way or make one,” is embodied by faculty, staff, and students alike.

Both students and teachers describe Holton as a welcoming and close-knit community in which people are known and respected. In particular, girls value the willingness of teachers to provide individual attention and support as they pursue challenging courses of study. To reinforce further the sense of community and the creation of strong relationships inside and outside of the classroom, students at all grade levels have access to counselors who focus on ensuring social-emotional wellness as well as academic achievement. Beginning in grade six and continuing through grade 12, girls are assigned to small advisory groups that

### Holton-Arms At a Glance

**Founded:** 1901

**2016 Enrollment:** 663

**Students of Color:** 35%

**Campus:** 57 acres in Bethesda, MD

**Total Faculty and Staff:** 175

**Student-to-Teacher Ratio:** 6-to-1

**Average Class Size:** 15

**Faculty Holding Advanced Degrees:** 86%

**Financial Aid:** Approximately \$4 million to 24% of student body

**Budget:** \$33.8 million

**Endowment:** \$51.5 million

**Annual Giving:** \$1.4 million

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meet regularly and give students the opportunity to discuss their needs and realities within a safe environment.



In addition to being a nurturing community for students, Holton-Arms is a uniquely supportive environment for faculty members. The school promotes life-long learning by encouraging teachers to visit each others' classes, discuss questions of pedagogy, and develop curriculum independently and in collaboration with other faculty members, both within and across departments. Holton provides grants for faculty development in order to promote professional growth, rekindle the spirit, and stimulate renewal of ideas, and

in addition has a generous professional development budget for graduate study and college credit course work. Faculty members also receive priority access to enroll their children in Brown House, an on-campus child development center for children from 6-weeks-old through pre-kindergarten. A full list of employee benefits is located [here](#).

As Holton-Arms looks to the future, four key areas for continued growth have been identified:

**Diversity.** The school is committed to cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community, and is one of the only D.C. area independent schools with nearly 40% cultural diversity. Continued initiatives will ensure that the school remains one that reflects a diversity of thought, identity, and experiences and which stimulates new ways of thinking and actively demonstrates respect for differences, moral courage, and appreciation for common ground. Included in this effort is a sustained investment in a comprehensive global education program, which develops students' understanding of other cultures, economies, environments, and political systems in order to prepare them to act responsibly and creatively to resolve issues of global significance.

**Health and Wellbeing.** Holton-Arms is continuing to implement a broad health and wellbeing initiative aimed at ensuring the social, emotional, physical, academic, and developmental growth of each student. The program takes a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach through a variety of courses, presentations, events, and facilitators to provide students with the necessary tools to be resilient and feel empowered to make healthy decisions. In support of this effort, each division has a dedicated counselor and learning specialist.

**Curriculum Review Process.** The school's 2010 strategic plan began a steady shift toward more student-centered learning, interdisciplinary teaching, and experiential education. The development of a streamlined curriculum review process will allow the school to continue to evaluate and revise courses as needed. Holton also created an academic dean position during the 2015-2016 school year in order to assess and ensure the scope and sequence of the grade 3-12 curriculum and provide all-school academic leadership. Finally, to generate more opportunities for collaboration and to foster a greater sense of community, the school is working

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with an architectural firm on the building of a Learning Commons, which will serve as both a physical and emotional center of the school.

**Philanthropy.** Holton-Arms has a \$51.5 million endowment and a \$1.4 million annual fund, both of which contribute to the institution's solid financial health. Looking ahead, the school seeks to grow the culture of philanthropy significantly, and as such, has begun the silent phase of a multi-million dollar campaign, *The Promise of Holton Arms: The Campaign for our Future*. This comprehensive fundraising effort will direct funds toward endowment (unrestricted, as well as in support of three targeted areas: faculty, financial aid, and global learning) and also to the construction of The Learning Commons. Through the anticipated gifts of generous donors, Holton hopes to secure its future and continue to provide its girls with an exceptional educational experience.

Holton-Arms School is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association of Independent Maryland Schools, and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools, the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington, the National Coalition of Girls' Schools, and a number of other professional associations.

### **The Middle School**

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The Middle School, a division comprised of 36 faculty and 155 students in grades seven and eight, is a transformative place in the life of girls. Responsibility for achievement shifts from faculty to students as girls internalize the process of learning and develop the lifelong academic habits to be successful in the Upper School and beyond. Middle Schoolers are known and supported by caring and dedicated faculty as they strengthen their self-esteem and confidence and learn to navigate the social challenges unique to this age group.



The Middle School offers a robust curriculum that requires students to take part in traditional academic areas, as well as a world language, athletics, the arts, and health. The division's Learning Specialist instructs all seventh grade students in the Tools for Learning course, in which girls explore brain function, executive functioning, and learning styles, and work to discover their strengths and develop tools for address their weaknesses. The Learning Specialist and the Guidance Counselor also collaborate to support the social-emotional wellbeing of girls as they explore the new academic challenges of Middle School and learn strategies for studying and time management. An overview of the curriculum and detailed list of course offerings can be found [here](#).

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A number of programs expose students to fields of study not covered by regular coursework. Outside-the-Box Days occur regularly throughout the school year. Designed by teachers, these interdisciplinary and experiential learning opportunities allow students to draw connections between various subjects and/or explore the myriad sites and resources of Washington, D.C. Previous topics include “The Civil Rights Movement: *Eyes on the Prize*,” “Great Age of Islam,” “Israel and Palestine – A Land Twice Promised,” “United States Supreme Court,” and “Africa Day.” Students may also take part in mini-mester courses, week-long offerings that explore issues such as “Cup of Humanity: the Japan-China Connection” and “Water: Protecting our Most Precious Resource.” As part of the global education curriculum, Middle Schoolers are invited to participate in a cultural/leadership/service trip to Belize and eighth graders may take part in an interdisciplinary leadership/service trip to New Orleans.

Technology plays an important role in the education of Holton-Arms students, and all Middle School girls take part in a one-to-one program using iPad 3s. Students learn about issues of digital citizenship including online safety, creating and maintaining a positive digital footprint, and the responsible use of technology. The Alice S. Marriott Library, available for use by Middle and Upper School students, also has a MakerSpace with 3D printers, sewing machines, robotic kits, play dough, and myriad other resources where girls can think creatively, collaborate on projects, or simply de-stress. Teachers use a number of educational apps, online digital libraries and subscription databases, and wireless projectors to facilitate the learning process, thereby preparing girls to transition successfully to Upper School with a firm understanding of technology.



Holton-Arms encourages students to take seriously the idea of “a leader in every seat,” and to lead both through example and by exploring formal leadership roles. The Student Council is made up of elected representatives from the seventh and eighth grades and works with a faculty sponsor to plan social activities, run the snack store, foster school spirit, act as a forum to discuss issues brought forth by students and teachers, and respond to and initiate suggestions for change. Seventh- and eighth-grade representatives also conduct respective class meetings and lead the planning

of class activities. As part of the division’s community service program, the Student Council meets at the beginning of the year with the student leaders of Landon School, the neighboring boys’ school, to identify meaningful causes and activities for collaborative service projects.

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### **The Opportunity**

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The Director of Middle School reports directly to Susanna A. Jones, Head of School since 2007. A graduate of Phillips Academy and Princeton University, she began her career as a teacher at the Spence School in New York City and earned both her M.A. and M.Phil. in history from Columbia University. She has extensive leadership experience in independent girls' schools, including her previous posts as Director of Upper School at Marlborough School and Head of School at The Ethel Walker School.

Anthony Shawe, who served as Director of Middle School for 10 years, accepted a position with International School Nido de Aguilas beginning in July 2016. Christy Diefenderfer, previously Assistant Head of Lower School at Holton-Arms, is serving in the interim role during the 2016-2017 school year. Mr. Shawe's leadership is cited as a key factor in building the culture of collegiality and trust that characterizes the division.

The new Director of Middle School will be tasked with continuing to improve the already-strong division and championing a number of initiatives, both division-centered and school-wide. The curricular review process helped the division to identify a number of areas of opportunity, including integrating community service more fully into the curriculum, increasing mini-mester offerings, exploring the use of classroom space to facilitate student-centered learning and collaborative projects, and creating a more interdisciplinary trip to replace the eighth grade trip to New Orleans. The Director will also work closely with the senior administrative team to implement the school-wide initiatives discussed in the "Introduction" section of this document.

### **Responsibilities**

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The Director of Middle School will be responsible for maintaining an atmosphere in which students and faculty feel valued, respected, and challenged and will oversee daily operations of the division including faculty and staff recruitment and development, curriculum revision, student life, scheduling, and academic and extracurricular programs. As a key member of Holton's 12-person senior leadership team, the Director of Middle School will participate in prioritizing and implementing school-wide strategic objectives that will reflect the school's mission and values; preserve its core culture of collaboration, community, and inclusivity; and ensure that best practices are pervasive throughout the three divisions. The Director will supervise the Middle School Guidance Counselor, the Middle School Learning Specialist, and an Administrative Assistant, as well as the Middle School faculty. Specific responsibilities include the following:

- Preserving a strong sense of community in which a student-centered approach is championed and students and faculty are respected, supported, and challenged.
- Working closely with faculty, the Guidance Counselor, and the Learning Specialist to ensure that every student is supported in her intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development, and fostering a culture in which high expectations for achievement are balanced with wellbeing and holistic growth.

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- Promoting a growth mindset and encouraging the achievement of professional goals among faculty through both formal development plans and ongoing conversations about best practices and trends in curriculum, pedagogy, and educational technology.
- Actively engaging in the daily life of the school, including being present in classrooms and at afterschool activities and events.
- Maintaining positive relationships and ongoing communication with parents regarding current happenings in the division and general information about the education and development of adolescents.
- Coordinating with other key administrators in the preparation of schedules and budgets.
- Working with the Academic Dean, Division Directors, and Department Chairs to continuously refine curriculum and programs to ensure that Middle School instruction is challenging, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with the scope and sequence of the full grade 3-12 arc of study.
- Collaborating with administrators at Landon School to cultivate a positive and productive relationship between the two schools.

**Candidate Qualities**

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Leadership

- An accessible, friendly, and open person who serves as the public face of the Middle School; who interacts easily with students, faculty, parents, trustees, and staff; and whose experience, intelligence, and dedication inspire the trust and confidence of others.
- A team-oriented individual who leads through influence and collaboration rather than solely by exercising the power of his or her office.
- An adept manager who is aware of important division matters at all times while still being comfortable delegating to an experienced and responsible faculty and staff.
- An educator who balances the need for scope, sequence, and general consistency in educational approaches with appropriate autonomy and flexibility for faculty members.

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### Experience

- Seven to ten years of experience as a teacher and leader in academically strong independent schools, including working at the Middle School level. Girls school experience, while not necessary, would be a positive attribute.
- A history of collaborating with department heads, faculty, and staff to refine educational policy, curriculum, and programs by incorporating research-based best practices in teaching and learning, educational technology, and global education.
- Exposure to motivating, mentoring, managing, and evaluating an exceptional faculty and staff.
- A track record of working successfully with a variety of constituencies, including administrators, faculty, parents, and students.

### Skills and Knowledge

- A broad and deep knowledge of issues relating to the education of adolescents and pre-adolescents, such as best practices in pedagogy and curriculum, social-emotional development, and parent education and interaction.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills that allow one to develop authentic relationships with students, faculty, staff, parents, and other constituents.
- The strategic thinking skills necessary to promote a vision, to develop and communicate a strategy, and to see a plan to completion, all while exercising the flexibility necessary to navigate successfully the sometimes-complex issues that arise in independent schools.
- The ability to contribute meaningfully to a team and culture within the context of an institution's history, traditions, and values, including working effectively with both new and veteran faculty and staff members.
- Skilled at active listening and inviting input from a wide range of people while still seeing to the core of an issue and making difficult decisions when necessary.
- The capacity to manage effectively the day-to-day activities of the division while simultaneously looking ahead to make and execute plans for the future.

### Personal Attributes

- A person of unquestioned honesty and integrity who interacts with people in a straightforward fashion.

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- One whose good sense of humor and high emotional intelligence allow him or her to develop genuine and meaningful relationships with a broad range of individuals.
- An educator who is passionate about the Middle School years and wholly committed to students' intellectual, physical, social-emotional, and moral development.
- A proactive, energetic, and innovative person who is constantly thinking about the best ways to educate girls and is motivated by what is best for students.
- A good listener who respects differences of opinion, seeks consensus when appropriate, and is comfortable making difficult decisions.
- An individual who embraces single-sex education, is excited about working in a girls' school, and has a genuine passion for the mission of Holton-Arms.

**Other Considerations**

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<u>Compensation</u>	Highly competitive with comparable schools in the region.
<u>Education</u>	Bachelor's degree required; master's degree strongly preferred.
<u>Website</u>	<a href="http://www.holton-arms.edu">www.holton-arms.edu</a>
<u>Candidates May Now Be:</u>	A Head of Middle School, Assistant Head of Middle School, or other senior administrator who is open to a move for professional growth.  A senior or mid-level administrator or teacher whose formal and informal leadership experience has equipped him or her with the skills and knowledge required for this position.  A Head of School of a smaller, high-quality institution.

**For more information, contact:**

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