

SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH....

SUE SADLER, HEAD OF SCHOOL, THE BRYN MAWR SCHOOL

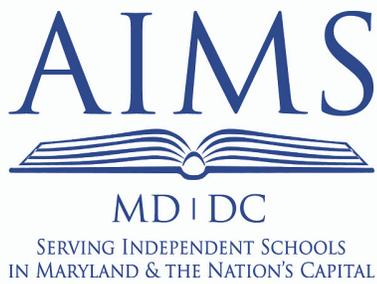


**What's your first memory of being a Head of School?
Why did you decide on a career in education?**

I can't remember ever not wanting to be a teacher. From the earliest time I can remember, I was playing school, to the great irritation of my younger brothers and cousins, and I always saw myself in the role of the teacher. Despite my mother being opposed (too traditional of a role for women, as she saw it...) I became a teacher right out of college and never looked back. I don't think being a Head of School occurred to me until well into my career. As my career advanced, I found myself mentoring new teachers and crafting various student experiences, and I realized I had something to offer in creating a positive educational environment. That's when being a Head began to seem like a possibility.

What experiences and preparation helped you become a head of school?

I think every experience in our lives prepares us for leadership. Being a student, a teacher, and a parent all added different perspectives to my life, which I try to remember in any situation. I have always loved school and learning, and I try to bring that joy to everyday life in schools. I've been lucky to have some spectacular mentors in my career, all of whom taught me something about decision-making and being fully present in the life of my schools. I continue to learn every day, through feedback from my community, how to best support them.



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Who was your best teacher?

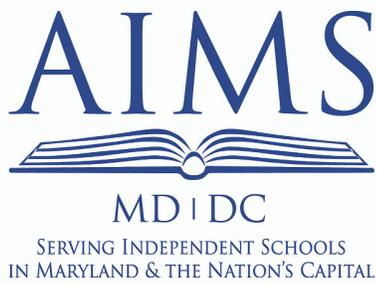
I have had a number of fabulous teachers, but I definitely credit my sixth-grade teacher, Miss Bloom, with inspiring the inner student in me. I thought she was VERY cool and followed her around like a puppy dog for a good part of the year. Her confidence in me, through a critical developmental time, brought out a resolve and determination that I didn't know I had within me. She was the right person at the right time and kept me on a good trajectory. I try to do that for girls today.

What experiences as a school head brought you the most joy?

In the fall, Bryn Mawr has a sensational Spirit Day, complete with the Morgan State marching band and more green, yellow and white daisy accessories than I ever thought possible! I made my debut as the "Mawrtian Queen" in the parade and had an out-of-body experience looking out at hundreds of little girls in green and yellow tutus yelling, "B-M-S, B-M-S!!" It will be hard to top that feeling.

What parts of the work were the most difficult?

Childhood today is such a different experience than when I grew up. On the positive side, kids today know they are capable of so much, and they contribute pretty significantly to the world around them. On the down side, there is a lot more anxiety and fear than I remember in my youth. Being the decision-maker and the "voice of the school" in turbulent, politically-charged times has been more of a responsibility than I imagined, and nothing in my education or career has really prepared me for this. These kids need hope and optimism, things that I think came a lot more naturally when I was growing up.



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How has the work of heading a school changed in your time?

I haven't been a head for that long, so I'll talk about what's changed in education. The very first thing I think about is technology. It's the great democratizer of society, eliminating the need for any real middleman for creative ventures or information. It's opened up experiences to all that were previously restricted to just a few. However, it's introduced the need to verify sources and protect ourselves in new ways. That same anxiety I just mentioned has really increased as we are surrounded 24/7 with such an abundance of news and opinion. It's polarized our society in ways that I feel are destructive and divisive. The visual imagery and consumerism that is constantly barraging us is at a whole new amplification. Managing that media message is a much larger task than in used to be, and it's impossible to keep it at bay during school hours. It's changing the very nature of childhood and teaching.

What lessons have you learned about leadership?

To me, leadership is about caring deeply about the mission of your school and making ethical decisions that keep students' needs at their heart. I really believe in the power of the team, and as much as possible, I strive to include different perspectives and voices into my conversations. So many times, there are no right answers, just less-wrong answers! In the end, though, I need to be able to stand by my decisions and know that I have acted in the best interest of the school.

If you weren't serving as a Head of School, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?

I love color, nature and music, so if I could, I'd be an artist living in some outdoorsy place like Sante Fe!