

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR SEARCH

NICHOLS SCHOOL

Buffalo, New York

nicholsschool.org

Start Date: July 2026



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

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At a Glance



Established
1892



Enrollment
560



Total coaches
120



Student-faculty ratio
8:1



Endowment
\$48M



AP courses
24



Athletic teams
55+



Campus size
30 acres

Total faculty: 75
Average class size: 14

Clubs and organizations: 40
Service opportunities: 35+



Overview

Nichols School, located in one of Buffalo's most attractive urban residential locations and founded in 1892, is a co-educational, independent college prep day school for grades 5-12. Known for its rigorous academics, small classes, dedicated teaching faculty, Nichols excels in developing well-rounded, ethical individuals through strong academics, arts, athletics, and community life. The school's mission statement - To train minds, bodies, and hearts for the work of life, and to carry into all we do the highest ideals of character and service - will be central to this role. Nichols School emphasizes critical thinking, innovation, and a balanced life, and is consistently viewed as amongst the strongest schools in all of western New York state.

Nichols School boasts a competitive and comprehensive athletics department which aims to promote physical fitness, teamwork, and sportsmanship among its students. The student/athlete experience is a crucial aspect of the school's culture, and Nichols recognizes and celebrates the critical learning and development that athletics delivers, with the majority of our students participating on athletic teams. The school offers a range of sports for both boys and girls, catering to various interests and skill levels, serving approximately 60 athletics teams across grades 5-12. We made a strategic decision to eliminate our football program due to the size of the school and the desire to redeploy those resources more productively across the Athletics Department.

Key features of the athletics department include:

- Wide Variety of Sports Programs:** The school provides opportunities in various sports including but not limited to hockey, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, tennis, field hockey, cross country, and swimming. This variety allows students to explore their athletic interests across multiple athletic platforms.
- Competitive Teams:** Nichols is part of the Western New York Federation and competes in the NY State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) leagues, the Monsignor Martin League, and the Conference of Independent Schools of Ontario League. Their teams consistently achieve success in interscholastic competitions, fostering a spirit of excellence and school pride.
- Focus on Development:** The athletics program emphasizes not only competition but also the personal development of student-athletes.
- Facilities:** The school boasts modern athletic facilities, including turf and grass fields, tennis and squash courts, 2 hockey rinks, 2 gyms, and a fitness center that supports both practice and competition.

Nichols School now seeks to hire the next Director of Athletics to oversee the entire athletics and physical education program, grades 5 through 12. The Athletic Director will report directly to Chris Burner, the Head of School, and work closely with other members of the leadership team.



Opportunities and Challenges

The next Athletic Director at Nichols will:

- Oversee the day-to-operations of the athletics and physical education department, including the supervision of other members of the athletic administrative department.
- Manage the impressive athletic facilities alongside the Director of Facilities and Director of Auxiliary Programs. This includes the oversight of the 2 hockey rinks, grass and turf fields, courts, and 2 gyms. The Athletic Director will work closely with the two administrators stated above to be sure the facilities are updated and utilized efficiently and effectively throughout all seasons.
- Ensure the physical education program at the school runs smoothly and bolsters positive physical fitness and healthy human development.
- Recruit, hire, and onboard excellent teachers of physical education and coaches for all the sports offered at the school.
- Be a visible member of the Nichols community both internally and externally. Internally, the Athletic Director will be actively involved in all facets of school life, athletics and otherwise. Further, the Athletic Director will be a present and visible member of the greater Buffalo community; an ambassador for the school's robust athletics program.
- Work closely with the Director of the school's excellent hockey program as well as other head coaches of other sports, ensuring a pathway to excellence for the student-athletes in those programs.
- Ensure that coaches and administrators engage in a timely, thoughtful and responsive fashion with parents.
- Serve as a thought-partner with Chris Burner, Head of School, as well as with other members of the leadership team.
- Reinforcing the excellence of a Nichols education and athletics will also translate into ensuring full enrollment and a student body that represents the best of Western New York.
- Understand and integrate the evolution of high school sports, today's student athletes, and the importance of understanding the customer/families into our athletic programming.



Qualifications and Personal Attributes

Professional Qualifications

- Significant athletic administrative experience, with experience in independent schools preferred.
- Strong background in managing complex athletic programs, including logistics, facilities, scheduling, and staff development.
- Understanding of policies related to school athletics, with preferred experience working within an independent school athletic league or equivalent.
- Proven ability to oversee and support a wide range of sports, levels, and student experiences—from elite athletes to first-time players.
- Experience collaborating with Admissions, Finance, College Counseling, and Facilities to align athletic priorities with institutional goals.
- Demonstrated success in recruiting, evaluating, and mentoring coaches and staff.
- Proven expertise in effective communication and engagement with students, colleagues, and parents.
- Strong organizational skills and a high level of executive functioning.
- Ability to manage and build camaraderie and a sense of ownership amongst an athletics administrative team.

Leadership Style and Personal Qualities

- Visible and relational leader who builds strong trust across constituencies.
- Skilled, empathetic communicator with exceptional oral and written abilities who demonstrates an organized and thoughtful approach to all communication.
- Proven dedication to fostering the personal, emotional, and athletic development of student-athletes.
- Strategic Thinker: sees both long-term and vision and tactical execution.
- Culture Builder: creates an environment of trust, accountability, and professional respect.
- Skilled Manager: sets expectations, gives clear feedback, and addresses issues promptly.
- Collaborative Partner: works seamlessly with faculty, students, families, and administration.
- Student-centered Leader: keeps student growth, safety, and well-being at the heart of all decisions.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Nichols School.

[School Website](#)

[College Matriculation](#)

[School History](#)

[About Buffalo, New York](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Rice Bryan

Senior Consultant

rbryan@carneysandoe.com

Tim Green

Senior Consultant

tim.green@carneysandoe.com

The full-time equivalent salary range for this position is \$115,000 - \$145,000, commensurate with experience. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise.