

AFTER SCHOOL

A Passion for the Pitch

Coaching youth soccer has helped this chief financial officer forge deeper connections with his colleagues and students.



John Harrington is chief financial officer and soccer coach at Pingree School, a college preparatory day school enrolling 375 students in Newburyport, Massachusetts. jharrington@pingree.org

Soccer has always been a passion of mine. While I enjoyed other sports like basketball and track in high school, it was soccer at which I was most successful as an athlete. In college, I was a regular starter for the University of Massachusetts Boston and was selected captain my last two years. I continued to play soccer to this day, participating in a top division of the Over the Hill Soccer League (more competitive than the name alone sounds, particularly in the younger age brackets), a Massachusetts-based, recreational soccer league for players over 30.

In 2011, I started my job as chief financial officer at Pingree School, a small day school in Hamilton, Massachusetts, where athletics is a co-curricular — not extra-curricular — activity. In my first year, I volunteered to help coach the school's soccer team. Now one of the many hats I wear at Pingree School is assistant varsity soccer coach.

Participating hands-on in school athletics gives me the opportunity to step out the business office some afternoons and get out on the soccer pitch for 10 to 12 weeks every fall. I get to work alongside great coaches, who are also members of our faculty, and who think of themselves as educators, players and fans. As soccer is an international

sport, we are able to come together to recognize, and mostly laugh about, our differences, but also share many things that we have in common, including soccer.

Of course, the most satisfying part of coaching is the interaction with the students and watching them grow as soccer players and as people. Every year, I share with the players my goal of spending as much time as possible with them. It's not just that we enjoy each other's company — the more time we spend together, the more success we have in post-seasons.

The Pingree soccer team has enjoyed a good deal of success, qualifying for the NEPSAC post-season tournament each of the last three years, and reaching the finals two years ago. I also enjoy being a fan of other schools in the NEPSAC, as my son participates on Worcester Academy's team, which is a top soccer program in New England and had its first championship season last year.

I think the character the Pingree players showed this season, participating with such focus despite a season lost to COVID-19, might be what impressed me the most about our students.

I love my job at Pingree School, and I love that coaching soccer is part of it. **N**



CFO John Harrington coaching soccer at the Pingree School.

We'd love to hear from you!

In After School, business officers share a passion or perspective from outside their usual working hours. Want to contribute? Email NetAssets@nboa.org. In the subject line, type **AFTER SCHOOL**.