

# David Mahler: Studying in Spain was 'powerful'

## Tips of the trade

**How do you manage the information flow?** I trust our team leaders to "push" information upstream as needed. They know what they can and should handle on their own. With two campuses and many operations, it would be impossible to handle things without such capable and strong people.

**Where do you get new ideas?** In addition to my reading, I like to take the opportunity to step back from day-to-day operations for reflective thought. This may come during road trips, while exercising or other time away from school.

**What's a valuable lesson a mentor taught you related to your profession?** Ron Gelbman, our former board chairman and current board member who held a number of executive positions with Johnson & Johnson, taught me "In God we trust. With everyone else we check the facts."

**How are you and your business dealing with the economic downturn?** At ODA, we've worked hard to establish a position of strength for the school through outreach, communication and transparency. We see great opportunity for growing and expanding in a difficult economic climate, but at the same time, are sensitive to the changing economic conditions facing our families.

## Background check

**What was your first paid job?** I was a newspaper delivery boy in Oneonta, N.Y., at the age of 12. It sounds like a story you tell your children, but I trudged through the snow to deliver the newspapers by hand.

**What did you want to be when you grew up?** When I was young, I wanted to be a farmer, as my grandfather had been. In college I was in pre-med studies before deciding to major in history. My studies in Spain were a powerful learning experience.

## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

### WHO AM I?

**NAME:** David V. Mahler

**TITLE AND COMPANY:** Head of School, The Out-of-Door Academy

**YEARS WITH THE COMPANY:** Five

**YEARS IN TAMPA BAY:** Five

**NATURE OF BUSINESS:** Independent elementary and secondary school

**EDUCATION:** Ed.M., curriculum and instruction, University of Virginia; B.A., history, Wesleyan University; Program in Spanish language, history, art and culture; Instituto Internacional, Madrid, Spain

### WHERE YOU GREW UP AND WHAT IT WAS LIKE

**LIKE:** Upstate New York in an area that was much like Norman Rockwell's America. Our community was like extended family.

**If you weren't in your current career, what would you be doing?** I would probably be teaching educators and teachers at the college level, working with people who want to make a difference. After 20 years in every facet of education, the message I want to convey is that education is our future and we need the best, brightest and most dedicated people to teach and inspire each new generation.

**What is your favorite activity with your family?** We have family game night once a week, whatever the kids choose to play. During the summer, we spend time in upstate New York without television or Internet access, and really turn the clock back to enjoy reading, creative play and family time.

**If you could have dinner with one person you've never met, who would it be and why?** Abraham Lincoln, my personal hero and inspiration. He is the ultimate symbol of inspirational, courageous and responsible leadership.

**Who are your heroes in the business world and why?** First, my father, who built his business from scratch the right way, following his ethical principles. Second is Ron Gelbman, an incredible mentor who has taught me so much about leadership and management principles.

**What do you read for business and for pleasure?** Education journals and books that relate directly to elementary and secondary education. For pleasure, nonfiction, particularly based in history.

**Do you collect anything and if so, what?** Antique globes because no two are similar. The orientation over time continues to change.

## Words to the wise

**Tell about a sticky situation in your life (business or personal) and how you got through it.** A good friend committed suicide when we were in college. It taught me to celebrate every day and invest in the personal relationships that are important to me.

**How could Tampa Bay change to be more business friendly?** By continuing to invest in education and the arts, which are central to what it means to be human. That investment will pay off as the community flourishes.



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Read tips provide time for reflective thought for David Mahler.  
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**THE LIST: FLORIDA CANCER CENTERS.**

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