

Update on Head of School Search

Dear Families, Friends, Faculty and Staff of SSCA,

The Board of Trustees and the Search Committee would like to thank those of you who participated in the opportunities over the last few days to engage with our final candidates for Head of School.

We have just completed a momentous week at SSCA addressing the transition we are embarking upon with our upcoming change in leadership. After Principal Walsh's resignation and decision to make this current school year her last at SSCA, it seems our community has been weighed down by the uncertainties of both new leadership and a slightly different leadership model. While the Board believed we were being as forthcoming as possible with the information we had during this search process, it became apparent to me during the parent, faculty and staff visits with our finalists that we had not sufficiently explained how the new administrative model will work. While the appropriate amount and method of communication is always a consideration for the school (for which we always strive to do better), the communication surrounding the leadership changes rests with me, and I now understand it has been insufficient. You have my apologies and let me try to answer some of the most common concerns I've heard here.

When Principal Walsh let us know of her plans to resign, we were most grateful that she gave us enough notice to approach replacing her in a thoughtful way with time to reflect on the needs of the Academy. In so doing, the Board determined to enhance the Diocesan model of leadership to include the very necessary business-like functions of overseeing a not-for-profit organization and school. Catholic education has changed much over the years as schools have had to transition from religious performing many of the functions of the school at very little cost, to laity performing those functions at market cost, as well as the diminished resources the Diocese is able to provide each school. A Head of School is a more comprehensive leader than the Diocesan role of a principal and the Board of Trustees believes this change is in the best interests of maintaining our success in a changing environment. At a time when enrollment has not yet recovered from pre-pandemic levels, greater expertise in enrollment, marketing and development is needed. However, the Board also very strongly believes that our undeniably very special school community should not change. Thus, a strong academic leader, one who can be described as similar to a principal, will also be imperative.

In an attempt to better define our envisioned leadership structure, I want to reiterate that we currently have a first and second position in school leadership (principal and assistant principal) and that won't change. A **Head of School** can be viewed as more outward facing, but in no way is removed from the heart and soul and educational philosophy of the school. Indeed, that person is charged with setting the course (and in our case tending to the challenges while maintaining our strong school culture).

Our **academic person**, a title to be determined in collaboration with our new Head of School, the Board, and the person in that role, will be more inward facing and will handle all things academic—much like Sue and Sophia do now, but without some of the principal tasks that are non-academic in nature. Our academic leader will hopefully be in this role because of a love of the educational aspects of administrative leadership and happy not to have to deal with the business parts of school leadership. We hope that a current member of the school faculty steps into the new academic role. We also hope that by identifying the discrete roles of each position, we can create positions better aligned with both our needs and the passions of our administrative team. Stepping away from the titles of Principal and Assistant Principal is likely because those titles have specific meaning and expectations within Diocesan schools and don't necessarily align with the Academy's needs.

If we are fortunate enough to secure the employment of either of our final candidates, please know that each of them believed that our school culture and community should not change. Additionally, each candidate is familiar with these kinds of transitions and is fully prepared to navigate the challenges. Please also know that the Board does not want to change the magic of our school. Change was inevitable, and we are trying to do everything we can to make SSCA stronger than ever while simultaneously feeling the same.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me or the Search Committee co-chairs, Pam Hamingson and Veracelle Vega-Hansen.

We are grateful for your partnership,

Lenae Guarna, Board Chair, and the Board of Trustees