New York State Association of Independent Schools
Executive Director Position Statement
July 1, 2022
Serving 199 member schools across the state, the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) is one of the leading regional associations of independent schools in the country. Since its founding in 1947, NYSAIS has supported independent education through accreditation, professional learning, legal and legislative advocacy, communication, consultation, and networking. While the greatest concentration of schools is in and around New York City, NYSAIS serves schools from Buffalo and Rochester in the western part of the state to the eastern tip of Long Island and north to the Capital District and beyond. With schools ranging from under 100 students to well over 1,000, all benefit from the Association’s programming and advocacy in support of its members.

NYSAIS seeks a dynamic, innovative, and entrepreneurial Executive Director who is passionate about independent education, the students and families served by the member schools, and the educators who dedicate their professional lives to them and possesses the vision and leadership experience to lead the association forward.

THE MISSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The New York State Association of Independent Schools promotes the independence, well-being and public understanding of, and respect for, New York independent schools and serves as an accrediting body chartered by the New York State Board of Regents.

In order to accomplish its mission, the New York State Association of Independent Schools:

- Establishes the criteria which reflect the values and best educational practices for evaluating and accrediting member schools.
- Promotes the professional growth of teachers, administrators, and trustees through workshops, conferences, and exchanges.
THE ORGANIZATION

In order to meet the needs of its member schools, NYSAIS employs a full-time staff of eight. In addition to the Executive Director there is a Director for Evaluation and Professional Learning, Associate Director for Professional Learning, Associate Director for Evaluation and Accreditation, Associate Director for Professional Learning and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives, Associate Director for Technology and Innovative Strategies, Chief Financial Officer, and Administrative Coordinator for Communications and Operations. The NYSAIS staff are supported by over a dozen Institute Leaders and Program Coordinators. Long before COVID required many to work remotely, the NYSAIS team moved to a decentralized, remote model over a decade ago. The staff uses technology effectively to be available to each other and constituents from member schools as needed, and it has allowed NYSAIS to draw professional talent from across the state. NYSAIS maintains a small office in Albany, in the shadow of the New York State Capitol, and the staff travels frequently to regional meetings, individual schools, and NYSAIS sponsored residential professional learning opportunities throughout the year. The Executive Director reports to the NYSAIS Board of Trustees which is largely made up of heads of member schools.

NYSAIS supports the work of its member schools in many ways. They include:

Accreditation: The NYSAIS accreditation process verifies that each school has been held accountable by a rigorous process and by the highest of standards on a 10-year cycle. Central to the process is the school’s self-study, using the NYSAIS Principles of Best Practice as the foundation. The examination is inclusive, involving all members of the school community and explores
all aspects of school life including governance, finances, teaching and learning, operations, and community. The NYSAIS accreditation process has served as a model for other state and regional associations and has itself been reviewed and approved by the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA).

**Professional Learning:** NYSAIS organizes conferences, workshops, institutes, and e-learning for teachers, heads, trustees, assistant and division heads, business and financial managers, and other administrators. Over 50 one-day, peer-run workshops are presented annually. NYSAIS holds 15-plus residential conferences each year and conducts five annual institutes for beginning teachers, experienced teachers, emerging leaders, justice, equity, and diversity leadership, and divisional leadership. While the COVID crisis did not allow for residential in-person workshops and conferences, NYSAIS has pivoted to providing these experiences virtually. The clear benefit is that it has allowed many more people to participate at a more reasonable cost. The opportunity for NYSAIS going forward will be to balance the benefits of in-person and residential professional learning with the greater accessibility and affordability of online participation.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice:** NYSAIS is committed to guiding and supporting all member schools in their effort to create and sustain communities that develop and implement principles and practices underscoring the place of anti-racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in their students’ education and experience. Although there is much work to be done by both NYSAIS and its member schools, this commitment is a foundational aspect of NYSAIS membership, fundamental to its work, and is clearly reflected in its Principles of Best Practice and accreditation standards. The annual NYSAIS Job Fair to Promote Diversity, started in 1990 in New York City, has grown in importance to member schools and now occurs in other parts of the state and has been replicated by other state and regional associations.

**Advocacy:** With a broad view of the educational landscape statewide, NYSAIS is an advocate for independent schools in New York State, speaking for their independence, well-being, and reputation before the agencies of government, the media, and the public, paying particular attention to developing state legislation and regulation as well as applicable judicial proceedings.
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In the next decade, the new Executive Director of NYSAIS will embrace opportunities and challenges to further the work of the Association and specifically:

• Continue to leverage the Association’s leadership in accreditation and professional learning to support excellence in NYSAIS member schools;
• Champion the interests of member schools with the state and local governments;
• Support research-based innovation for independent schools;
• Advocate for and provide leadership and support to member schools in the area of diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice;
• Make clear the value proposition of NYSAIS in a landscape of many dues-based organizations designed to support independent schools;
• Develop strategies to support the long-term sustainability of member schools in the face of demographic, economic, and regulatory challenges as well as increased competition from public, charter, and for-profit schools;
• Attend to the business model of NYSAIS to ensure long-term financial sustainability;
• Continue to deliver robust professional learning for faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees that is relevant and accessible to all member schools;
• Embrace the breadth of schools in New York State and balance their diverse needs;
• Work with member schools to capitalize on the opportunity and learning presented by the COVID crisis;
• Provide expertise in school governance to boards of trustees in member schools.
QUALIFICATIONS
The NYSAIS Board of Trustees seeks an Executive Director who displays optimism and energy, unquestioned integrity, humility, critical thinking and problem solving skills, thought leadership, a collaborative nature, warmth and empathy, decisiveness, creativity, a sense of humor, and a discerning wisdom about people. A successful candidate will also be able to demonstrate the following skills, values, and experiences:

- Strategic leadership in a complex organization;
- Unabashed belief in, knowledge of, and appreciation for what makes independent schools special and essential within the educational landscape in New York State;
- Deep understanding of governance and the crucial role that trustees play in successful schools;
- An aspirational, innovative, and entrepreneurial vision for education broadly and for the role NYSAIS plays in supporting its member schools;
- First-hand knowledge of best practices in governance, strategic planning, and financial management of schools;
- Commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in schools;
- Ability to negotiate both theory and practice in terms of school leadership and governance;
- Inspirational oral and written communication skills;
- Strategic planning and effective program management skills;
- Effective manager of teams, whether in person or remotely, and cultivator of professional talent.

APPLICATION
NYSAIS has retained Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support the search for its next Executive Director. To apply, interested candidates should prepare a cover letter, current resume, and personal statement. Candidates are requested to submit these materials online at: https://rg175.com/candidate/signup

For an initial inquiry or to nominate a potential candidate for this exciting position, please contact RG175 consultant Tony Featherston at tfeatherston@rg175.com.

Application Deadline: **July 15, 2021** Start Date: **JULY 1, 2022**

NYSAIS is an equal opportunity employer and values the strength diversity brings to the workplace.