



October 1, 2021

Dear Members of the NYS AIS Community,

I am thrilled to announce that on September 27th, upon recommendation from the Search Committee, the Board of Trustees of the New York State Association of Independent Schools voted unanimously to appoint Vince Watchorn as our next Executive Director, starting July 1, 2022.

Vince's selection comes at the end of a comprehensive and deliberate process that started soon after Mark Lauria announced his retirement at the end of June 2022. Our association owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the members of the Search Committee and in particular to Jenny Rao, Chair, for her remarkable leadership throughout the process. In addition to Jenny, the Search Committee included Laura Danforth, Martha Hakmaat, Phil Kassen, Chris Lauricella, and Amani Reed. Each member of the Search Committee brought their own experience, skillset, and background to the process and spent many hours engaged in extensive conversations about the value of NYS AIS to our schools, the future of the association, and the relevant strengths of each candidate.

NYS AIS was fortunate to partner with our search consultant from RG175, Tony Featherston, a former New York State Head of School well versed in the work of NYS AIS. A testament to the strength and appeal of our association, the opportunity attracted a diverse and highly-qualified pool of candidates. In addition to the Search Committee, finalists were interviewed by the NYS AIS Staff and Board of Trustees. Each candidate was carefully considered in the context of the skills the Board and Search Committee identified as needed for our next Executive Director.



Vince Watchorn, a nationally recognized leader of and consultant for independent schools, emerged as the visionary leader NYS AIS needs to build on Mark Lauria's superb legacy and to guide us through the challenges and opportunities faced by independent schools. Vince has devoted his career to independent schools, and as he said during the interview process, NYS AIS will create a grounding center allowing him to continue to serve independent schools.

Vince led Providence Country Day School for eight years and is deeply familiar with the multifaceted complexities of independent school leadership, management, and governance. His impact has grown to the national level where he led important initiatives at NAIS, including the Aspiring Head of School Institute and as faculty member of the Institute for New Heads. He was also the editor of the NAIS Head Search Handbook. More recently, he has led strategic and innovative work with the Edward E. Ford Foundation and the Southern Association of Independent Schools, and he has been involved in extensive policy work. Vince has authored articles for the NAIS magazine and Educational Directions publication on governance, trusteeship, and diversity.

Vince brings substantial experience to DEIJ work. He is an effective and valued partner for DEIJ consulting work, along with work he has done in the Delaware Racial Justice Coalition. His personal DEIJ trajectory is very forward moving, and he has become a powerful voice for change and model to fellow educators.

Inspirational and humble, Vince is a deeply compelling communicator, who “kept us on the edge of our seats,” as one Search Committee member put it. He has built a vast and impressive network with independent school educators and leaders across the country, evidence of his gift to connect meaningfully with others. As we grew to know him better, it became evident that ultimately, he will keep the focus of NYSAIS on how it can best serve its members.

Vince is a graduate of The Tatnall School, DE, Muhlenberg College, PA, with a degree in Political Science and History, and Wilmington University, DE, with two M.Ed.s, one in Instruction, Teaching, and Learning, and one in School Leadership. He participated in the Columbia University Klingenstein Center Heads Program.

Vince brings a breadth and depth of theory, practical experience, and vision that the Search Committee and the Board of Trustees found compelling and inspiring. In the months ahead, a transition committee will introduce Vince to the full membership, and I am confident that you will see, as we did, what an extraordinary leader NYSAIS is fortunate to have found to serve our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jean-Marc Juhel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jean" and last name "Juhel" clearly distinguishable.

Jean-Marc Juhel  
NYSAIS, President

October 1, 2021

Dear Members of the NYSAIS Community,

It is understated to say I'm overjoyed to lead such an important organization, and at such a critical time. The opportunities and challenges facing independent schools and society in the coming years are intertwined, impossible to separate from each other. The opportunities *are* the challenges; the challenges *are* the opportunities. Our chosen future lies in the balance.

In our finalist interview, the board asked me: "Why NYSAIS? Why now?" When I decided to leave Providence Country Day School after an eight-year tenure, I left behind a job I loved and a school I loved even more. I sought to have a broader impact; to become a renewed leader -- one aligned with my dedication to serving schools and fostering the potential of heads who would, in turn, affect the lives of students. As a consultant, taking on several national-scope projects and working with a broad array of individual schools has allowed me to explore a variety of impacts. What I've missed is the grounding center that can only be achieved with a commitment to a single organization. NYSAIS combines these passions perfectly.

The prospect of leading NYSAIS makes me eager to build on my many relationships with New York educators, to travel the State—from Buffalo to Montauk, around the many corners of the city that never sleeps, and all points in between—learning about schools' needs and understanding what is around the corner for all of us. It will be a privilege to know exceptional schools that demonstrate the tremendous breadth of the Empire State's educational landscape.

Yet the work is not approached alone. Nothing is. During the search process, I had the chance to meet the talented, dedicated staff of NYSAIS. This group showed an affection for their work, a hunger to serve and reflect and teach and innovate and just make the world a better place through schools. Together, the NYSAIS team will stand on the shoulders of Mark Lauria's exquisite leadership these past 13 years and find new ways to refine and expand our commitment to member schools. I can't wait to start working with them, in transition and beyond.

I am thankful to Jean-Marc Juhel, Jenny Rao, the Search Committee, and to the NYSAIS trustees, who gave much time to the search; and to Tony Featherston of RG175, who thoughtfully stewarded the process.

Very few people ever get to do a job that lets them serve the world in the way they wish. I look forward to engaging New York's independent schools and to leading a community where all stakeholders feel included in the conversation.

Sincerely,



Vince Watchorn