



SANT BANI SCHOOL

Dear Sant Bani School Parents,

I write to you with two items to share. The first is with a sincere thank you for all of your patience as the School has had to make a significant transition because of COVID-19. If any of you have family members who may have been diagnosed with the coronavirus or those of you with family members living far away who are at risk, the Board extends its most sincere best wishes to you.

Second, as you know, the School engaged in an extensive search process with the assistance of Doug Cummings of Educators' Collaborative that ultimately led to the selection of Jessica Romero as the incoming Head of School. Some of you had a chance to meet with her and gain some sense of her strong qualities as an educator and administrator.

Since her selection, Board members have had close and ongoing contact with Jessica. She participated on a regular basis in conference calls with Nan, Chris Bicknell, and me related to the functioning of the School and her upcoming transition. In addition, Chris, Nan, and I traveled to New York City in January to spend a weekend with Jessica to plan out her transition to SBS. She subsequently attended a conference with Chris for incoming Heads of School hosted by ISANNE (Independent Schools Association of Northern New England). Jessica was scheduled to be on campus at the end of March, but COVID-19 and the related stay-in-place orders issued led to the cancellation of those plans.

Then on April 1, Chris and I received the below email from Jessica.

Dear Chris and Whit,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this email. Due to unforeseen personal circumstances I will not be able to serve as Head of School and need to withdraw immediately.

Although we have not known each other long, I hope you know that I did not come to this decision lightly. While I intend to keep the details of my circumstances private, I understand that you may want to speak with me and am willing to do so.

*Sincerely,
Jessica*

Chris and I were completely surprised by this email. Chris, as the head of the Search Committee, called Jessica immediately to follow-up. Unfortunately, that call did not yield any further information about the reasons for her decision.

On Saturday, April 4th, the full Board met via Zoom to address this situation. It authorized Chris and me to offer Nan the position of Interim HOS for the 2020-2021 school year. That afternoon, Chris and I had a conference call with Nan, and she respectfully declined the offer as she has other plans for the coming school year.

The Board met again via Zoom on April 8th and decided to convene a small Interim Head of School Search Committee, composed of Board members, to immediately begin a search for an Interim Head of School. Chris Bicknell serves as Chairperson of this Committee, and the Board Members on the Committee are Lisa Hilberg Craig, Sarah DeBenedictis, and Charlie Boynton.

Due to the fact that Jessica's decision came 90 days before she was to begin service to the School, this Committee has already begun its work with Doug Cummings to identify candidates for the Interim Head of School position. Doug's extensive experience and involvement in the world of independent schools will be of enormous value in finding and vetting candidates within our unexpectedly short timeline.

Once the interim search process is completed and an Interim Head of School is hired, the Board will conduct another search for a permanent Head of School. That search process will provide for robust involvement and input by all the School's constituencies, just as happened last year.

Obviously, this is a message I deliver to you regretfully, but I do find some measure of solace in two things. First, all indications are that Jessica's decision was driven by personal reasons that had nothing to do with our School, and her decision should not be taken as reflecting in any way on the quality of our School. Second, I believe in the resilience of this School, in the resilience of its spirit, and in the resilience of all its constituencies. At various points in its history, the School has faced difficult challenges -- sometimes financial, sometimes organizational, sometimes programmatic. In each instance, the School community collectively has met those challenges, and it will do so again now.

Sincerely,
Whit

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O. Whitman Smith, President
Sant Bani School
Board of Directors

Be Good. Do Good. Be One.