

Hollis Amley
Personal Statement and Leadership Philosophy

At my core, I am a teacher. Whether my “classroom” is a faculty meeting, a parent wellness talk, a conversation with a student who uses poor judgment, recruiting and onboarding new teachers, presenting an initiative to the Board, or instructing my own art history students, I seek to bring out the best in others both as individuals and as a group by investing heartily in their development and helping them to realize their full potential. Each of these scenarios, along with countless others in all parts of the school house, provides me with the opportunity to listen, facilitate conversations, impart knowledge and resources, and to empower others to imagine solutions, challenge assumptions, and to inspire ideas that grow and better the school community.

Being a Head of School offers an even larger platform and scope of perspective for me to apply my teaching and leadership skill set. Good teachers do not have all of the answers, nor do they think they have them; instead, they solicit input and collaborate with others. Similarly, I meet regularly with my two chief leadership teams, the Upper School Administrative Team (8 members) and the Academic Team (10 members) to hear their viewpoints and to create a space for dialogue about present dynamics and future programmatic visions and goals. As I facilitate these conversations, I am also conscious of prioritizing programs and action steps in accordance with the school mission and building consensus with the unique stakeholders. Nevertheless, there are times when consensus is not possible and decisions must still be made. I have found that as long as the decision-making process is transparent, thoughtful, and includes clear goals and objectives, trust and community commitment can still grow in these discordant moments.

Establishing the vision for growth arises from looking in and looking out as an institution. It requires reflective questions, such as:

- What are we doing well as a school, and how do we maintain that stamina, while keeping it relevant?
- What are we saying that we are doing, but we are not?
- What is a school tradition, which knits us tighter as a community, and what is a bad habit, which fractures community or excludes members?
- How does someone in the community know if he/she is doing well in his/her role?
- Where does the school want to be in one, five, ten, or twenty-five year(s)?

Ultimately, schools are a unique playground where development and transformation, no matter the age of the student, arise from curiosity, increased knowledge, courageous exploration, and a supportive and inclusive community. I appreciate that some of life’s greatest lessons and “teachable moments” are learned away from a book, perhaps in a match against a fierce opponent or recovering on stage after forgetting one’s lines. These stinging moments are fleeting, but essential to growth. Often, personal growth and maturation occurs within the mundane, but always upon reflection. As a leader with a teacher’s eye, I see these struggles and challenges as opportunities to assemble a community of nurturing adults, from parents to advisors to faculty to trustees, who encourage children to persevere, to recover with grace, and to honor their integrity, not just the immediate results.