



October 11, 2023

Dear Members of the SEM Community,

On behalf of SEM's Board of Trustees and the Head of School Search Committee, we are thrilled to announce that Blair Parker has been appointed The Buffalo Seminary's 15th Head of School, effective July 2024.

Blair is one of the most exciting, promising, and transformational leaders in independent education. She has 20 years of experience as an educator and administrator at four distinctive independent schools: two schools for girls (one boarding, one day) and two coed day schools. She defines herself as a "school person," and as a teacher, coach, and leader, she understands the various and diverse dimensions of an independent school. During her school visit, Blair emphasized that a school's purpose is to form community and to be a place of belonging. She argued that the demands of our future society require confident women leaders and that SEM has the traditions and resources to achieve this. In making this choice, we have selected a confident, warm, and collaborative leader who recognizes the "SEM magic" and is fully prepared to lead us into our next 175 years. Blair joins a legacy of distinguished Heads of School who have established SEM as a leader in education for girls.

A graduate of the University of Virginia, Blair has a master's degree in independent school leadership from Teachers College at Columbia University. She is currently the Head of Upper School at Friends Seminary in New York City where she leads 300 students and more than 50 faculty and staff. Previously, Blair taught at Riverdale Country School, National Cathedral School, and Emma Willard.

Selecting a Head of School is among the most important duties of the Board of Trustees, and we are deeply grateful to our fellow Search Committee members and trustees for their thoughtful and diligent efforts throughout this process. We are also grateful to our search partners at Storbeck Diversified Search Group and to all of you—faculty, staff, administrators, students, parents, alumnae, past trustees, and friends of SEM—who engaged in the process and with each of our highly qualified and impressive Head of School candidates. You gave generously of your time and provided valuable insights each step of the way. Thank you.

Blair and her partner, Beth Onofry, have fallen for Buffalo and for SEM. They are excited to raise their two young children here. We know that the SEM community will warmly welcome Blair and her family and introduce them to all the wonderful things that Buffalo has to offer.

As we look forward to welcoming Blair and her family to SEM next July, we are also focused on celebrating Helen's extraordinary legacy as she continues to lead our school through June. Please stay tuned for updates on the festivities to come.

These are exciting times for SEM!

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Daily Gress". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Daily Gress P'23,'26
Board of Trustees, Chair
Search Committee, Chair

Head of School Search Committee Members:

Catherine Earle P '17, Mary Kelkenberg P '21,'23, Kara Hornung Kerwin '98, Erin O'Brien '86, Elizabeth Roach, Jennifer Roberts '92, Kate Bowen Smith '92, P '23, Carrie Brown Wick '76