



independent schools association
of the **central states**

Information for Candidates

***Executive
Director***

ISACS leads schools to pursue exemplary independent education.

inspiring independent schools

Information for Candidates

The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) invites applications for the role of Executive Director to begin July 1, 2026, when the current ED retires.

ISACS serves more than 240 member schools covering a 13-state region, offering accreditation services, professional learning, and opportunities for networking. The ISACS mission is to lead schools in providing exemplary education. ISACS is committed to helping members be innovators and leaders in American precollegiate education and to do so in a manner that shows a commitment to continuous improvement with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

ISACS functions as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in Indiana. The Board of Trustees is composed of heads of school, teachers, trustees, and senior administrators, because ISACS is committed to engaging all professionals in the work of continuous improvement. The direct work of the association, accreditation services and professional learning activities are the responsibilities of the full-time Executive Director and an 8-member professional office staff. Member school volunteers contribute to professional growth activities, and serve on Board committees and on accreditation teams. Since 1908 and with a commitment to the future, ISACS today serves independent schools to uplift the educational experience and touches the lives of over 90,000 students in the Central States.

Member schools and professionals throughout the region engage actively in association activities and express great pride and appreciation for the work of ISACS. This is an exciting opportunity to lead an organization that members see as a lighthouse. With so many challenges facing schools and educators today, ISACS has the opportunity to be a beacon of light, providing support and guidance. ISACS mission is to lead independent schools in providing exemplary education.



The Association

ISACS is in an enviable position as an association that is primed to continue delivering exceptional service to the membership as well as to be transformative in the independent school industry. From a highly functional staff to a Board that is built to support an Executive Director who will be a pacesetter of thought and re-imagination, ISACS is poised for a bold future.

The geography represented by ISACS is broad. In covering over a dozen states, the range of schools matches the breadth of its geography and makes for a wealth of perspectives. ISACS has a tremendous opportunity to further leverage its diversity of schools in order to transform its service model.

One needs only a cursory look at the [ISACS website](#) in order to see how the association has truly aligned its programming with the needs of the various school leaders as well as with its strategic priorities. Independence, excellence, equity, integrity and continuous improvement are in full operation at ISACS.

ISACS has eight staff members, in addition to the Executive Director:

- Director of Accreditation
- Accreditation & Executive Associate, who provides administrative support to the accreditation operation and the work of the Executive Director
- Director of Special Accreditation Projects
- Director of Communications & Marketing
- Director of Learning
- Director of Programs
- Director of Technology & Client Services
- Director of Finance

Professional staffing has continued to reflect the evolving needs of the membership while delivering high quality service in a hybrid work environment. There is a physical office overlooking the Chicago River which includes a meeting center for in-person professional development events.

Association Services

The work of accreditation and professional learning is supported by standing committees. These committees are comprised of member school faculty and staff who have not only gifts and talents but a desire to serve the membership and their peers. These are the Professional Services Committee, Administrative Services Committee, Equity & Justice Committee, and the Accreditation Review Committee.

Accreditation

With compliance, congruence and continual improvement as the key guiding factors, the accreditation process for ISACS is both robust and reflects best practices for accrediting organizations. The seven year cycle is coordinated by the ISACS staff, including conducting school visits, assembling visiting teams, and supporting the work of the Accreditation Review Committee.

Professional Learning

An equally valuable service provided by the association is professional learning. As there is a pursuit of our schools being in pursuit of continual improvement, there is a parallel need for the people who populate our schools to be in continual growth. ISACS offers an array of role-specific and whole-industry professional learning opportunities both in person and virtually.

Core Values

Equity

Integrity

Continuous
Improvement

Vision

ISACS schools empower all students to contribute and thrive in a diverse and changing world.



The Executive Director

The ISACS Executive Director will be tasked with executing a strategic course with the Board while working with the professional staff to ensure the effective implementation of strategic initiatives. The Executive Director will direct services for the membership and serve as the staff point-person for heads and board chairs. This work will include, but not be limited to: fielding requests for resources and counsel, visiting with heads on campus and at regional meetings, planning and hosting the annual two-day conference for heads, participating in the ISACS year-long program designed to support new heads and providing school-based governance support when needed. To facilitate strong relationships with ISACS Heads and staff, and to promote visibility, it is expected that the Executive Director will accomplish this work while residing in the region, preferably in the greater Chicago area.

In 2023, The Board of Trustees endorsed the most recent strategic plan, Leading for Change. There was wide and active participation in the development of the strategic plan through an online survey, a dozen focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and listening sessions. Throughout the strategic planning process, it became clear that school leaders are looking to ISACS to offer thought-leadership and support in the following key areas:

- Celebrating and preserving school independence
- Articulating and promoting the value of an independent school education
- Offering approaches that will help schools navigate complex and often conflicting DEIB perspectives
- Supporting schools in their recruitment and retention of diverse faculty & staff
- Addressing topics related to financial sustainability: competition, demographics, financial downturn.

Four Goals emerged through this effort:

- 1** Uplift school independence
- 2** Foster excellence and sustainability
- 3** Forge thriving communities
- 4** Advance ISACS operational excellence

Within each priority area, there are several bullets. The full strategic plan document will be made available to candidates as they advance. The ISACS Board remains unwavering in its commitment to DEIB in an association where a “big tent” brings together a variety of schools with differing approaches on how to accomplish that work. Through accreditation and other services, the Association requires and supports the work of each ISACS school to provide an equitable, affirming, safe, and just environment. This issue remains at the top of mind for many.

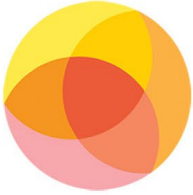
Leadership Profile

ISACS enters the Executive Director (ED) search from a position of strength. The association members, the Board of Trustees and the professional staff are eager to attract candidates who are poised to work in partnership to build on the strong foundation already in place. As the intellectual/visionary, community, and administrative leader for ISACS, the ED is responsible for modeling the association's values and overseeing all aspects of the association, including the operations, finances, accreditation, and professional learning. The next ED will be an exceptional listener who strives to build connections and rapport among all stakeholders, while providing pastoral care to those in need. They will forge a compelling path forward to provide exceptional independent education and will have the skills and courage to make the decisions necessary to lead the organization effectively in partnership with the Board and the professional staff. Under this new leader, ISACS will continue to foster the conditions that allow school leaders and independent school communities to thrive in an ever-changing and increasingly-polarized world.

As members of the association describe the ideal candidate, they seek:

- A charismatic thought leader who stays abreast of the research and trends in independent education to foster collaboration, shared vision and action;
- A visionary and highly effective leader with experience at the senior level in a comparable organization (school, association, nonprofit);
- A champion for continuous improvement in schools through accreditation and strategic planning processes;
- A connector who engages in and nurtures professional networks for mutual learning, support and benefit;
- A proponent of good governance in nonprofit organizations, with personal experience in governance, both as a senior leader and as a member of a board;
- An advocate for the full range of mission-driven ISACS schools;
- An individual who can manage difficult conversations with respect and compassion, while also holding firm, when needed;
- A coach for school leaders as they navigate leadership or governance challenges, while helping them to become more confident and effective in their role;
- An excellent manager who demonstrates a collaborative approach with professional staff; financial acumen; strong time and workflow management; and skilled use of technology;
- A clear and effective communicator, both in writing and verbally, including as a public speaker;
- A leader who is both entrepreneurial and strategic, and who demonstrates high EQ, a sense of humor and gratitude.

While few candidates will confidently check all of these boxes, this description of the ideal candidate reflects the aspirations members of the ISACS community hold for their next Executive Director.



EDUCATORS COLLABORATIVE

SEARCH, TRANSITION, AND STRATEGY

To Apply

Submissions for Executive Director of ISACS are being accepted from February 1–28, 2025.

Candidates are asked to submit a single pdf of their dossier in the order below.

- Candidate Summary Sheet (Requested from consultant)
- Letter of Interest addressed to the Search Committee which conveys the candidate's understanding of the challenges and opportunities of leading a regional association like ISACS. Please share specific leadership experiences that have prepared you for the role.
- Current CV
- Contact information for five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission)
- Disclosure Form (Requested from consultant)

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