



April 22, 2026

Dear Stanbridge Community,

When I began as Head of School in July 2016, I could not have imagined that my tenure would span a decade—a decade defined by profound change, growth, and navigating the complexities of a global pandemic. What initially drew me to Stanbridge was the opportunity to return to my roots in special education; what has kept me devoted for the past ten years is this warm, caring community, our inspired educators, and our incredible students.

I am writing today to share that I will be leaving Stanbridge at the end of the calendar year. My husband and I have long dreamed of moving to Hawaii. My father-in-law's family was originally from Wahiawa on Oahu, and with cousins still living in Maui, the pull toward family and heritage is strong. While we previously postponed this move to focus on the goals I wanted to accomplish for our school, the timing is now right. I have accepted an opportunity at a small school in Maui that allows me to continue the work I love.

Reflecting on Our Journey

I look back on the milestones we achieved together with immense pride. These accomplishments have solidified our foundation:

- **CAIS Accreditation (2018):** Undergoing our first accreditation with the California Association of Independent Schools raised the bar for our academic offerings and streamlined our governance and operations.
- **2025-26 CAIS** re-accreditation self study and the positive team visit this fall. We will get our official accreditation status this June.
- **Faculty Excellence:** We have actively supported many of our faculty members in obtaining their SpEd credentials and Master's degrees, ensuring our educational program remains at the forefront of the field.
- **NPS Certification:** By becoming a certified Non-Public School (NPS), we opened our doors to school districts for IEP placements. This vital step has allowed us to serve a much broader range of families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Expanded Services:** We have integrated robust Speech and Language, Counseling and Occupational Therapy services to provide holistic support for both our students and our staff.
- **Facilities Upgrades** including a fabulous new play structure, sport court and pavilion shade structure. Outfitting all our classrooms with the technology needed to support a full well-rounded educational experience.

These accomplishments have built an organization that is academically rigorous, operationally strong and positioned to welcome new leadership with confidence. I remain fully engaged in the

work ahead as we will finish out this school year and prepare for and begin the next year. I have confidence that the board will lead a transparent search that will allow our community to have input into who will have the great fortune to lead Stanbridge on the next steps of its journey.

A Message of Gratitude

None of this would have been possible without our **incredible educators and staff**. You bring so much of yourselves to this school every day. I am humbled by your dedication and have learned so much by working alongside you.

To our **Board of Trustees**, I owe you a debt of gratitude for giving me the opportunity to lead this remarkable institution. Your unmatched passion, trust, and support have allowed our school to thrive and reach new heights.

The Board has made the excellent decision to appoint Cindy Schlesinger as interim head of school, serving during the period after my departure and before the new head of school begins. Cindy is uniquely qualified to ensure the smooth operation of the school during this transition and has earned the trust and confidence of our entire school community. I will work closely with her to ensure a seamless transition into this critical role. Cindy, thank you for your partnership and for taking on this responsibility for Stanbridge.

I will always be a supporter and a cheerleader for this community.

With gratitude and warmth,

Julie Smith

Head of School