



April 22, 2026

Dear Stanbridge Academy Community,

I write today to share news that will likely bring a mix of emotions for many in our community. Julie Smith has informed the Board of Trustees that she will conclude her tenure as head of school at the end of calendar year 2026. She brought this decision to the board with the same deliberateness and care she has brought to every aspect of her leadership, and we are grateful for the thoughtfulness and generosity she has shown in how she has shared it.

The school Julie leaves behind speaks for itself. Over the past 10 years, Julie has helped shape Stanbridge into a leading school for students who learn differently. Her vision and care have strengthened our curriculum across all grade levels and brought together an exceptional team of educators and staff who live our mission every day. Julie also led Stanbridge through its successful accreditation as a K–12 nonpublic school—an important milestone that expanded opportunities for partnership with school districts and extended our reach to more students and families.

What makes this transition different from many leadership changes is that Julie is staying on for the next several months. She will serve fully as head of school through the end of the calendar year 2026. Families, students and staff can count on the same leadership, the same relationships and the same commitment to our students that have defined the past decade. I am pleased to share that for the Winter/Spring term, from January 1- June 2027, our current principal, Cindy Schlesinger, will serve as interim head of school. Cindy brings a wealth of experience, including prior leadership as a head of school, and we have great confidence in her ability to guide Stanbridge with care and continuity during this transition.

The board takes seriously its responsibility to select Stanbridge's next head of school, and we are committed to a process that is transparent, inclusive and fully engaged with our school community:

- The Board appointed Laura Selig as head of the search committee and is in the process of establishing a formal search committee. Laura's background in human resources brings directly relevant expertise to this process.
- The Board has retained 12M Recruiting, an executive search firm that has served independent schools since 2015 and brings a particular commitment to diversity, intentionality and mission alignment to every search. Their familiarity with the independent school landscape and the unique needs of schools like ours made them a natural partner for this process.
- 12M Recruiting will kick off the search process with a discovery/listening phase this spring, focused on gathering input from the Stanbridge community through surveys and in-person conversations, which are meant to create opportunities for you to provide

feedback and to provide valuable input to the leadership profile that the firm will use to evaluate candidates.

- Recruiting, prospecting and marketing begins in earnest over the summer, with candidate interviews and evaluations taking place in late fall.
- The goal is that the new Head of School will be announced at the end of the 2026 calendar year, and will formally start as Stanbridge Head of School on July 1, 2027.

As noted above, the Board and I are deeply committed to keeping the Stanbridge community well informed and updated as this search process moves forward. To that end, a dedicated webpage is now live at www.stanbridgeacademy.org/head-of-school-search where you will find useful information and updates about the search process. We will keep it regularly updated throughout the process with search committee information, community meeting dates, survey links and key dates. Additionally, we have created a dedicated email for you to connect with the search committee at any time. Questions, feedback and candidate referrals are welcome at headsearch@stanbridgeacademy.org.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that Julie's transition is a lot to process for many members of our community. I want to reassure you that the search committee and I are focused on ensuring a seamless transition during the next school year and selecting a new head of school who will carry forward the stellar leadership example that Julie has demonstrated during her tenure. On behalf of the board, thank you, Julie, for a decade of leadership that has left this school meaningfully better than you found it.

Sincerely,

Kinga Czégeni
Board Chair, Stanbridge Academy