



Announcing Our Next Head of School & Chief Operating Officer at Bennett

Dear Bennett Community,

On behalf of our Search Committee and Board, I am proud to announce that **Heidi Hutchison** will become our **Head of School & Chief Operating Officer** at Bennett Day School, starting July 1, 2026!

Selecting a leader to shepherd the future continued growth of our community was a process we approached with dedication and intention. We sought a leader who embodies our future-focused mission, understands the entirety and complexity of the K-12 arc, and possesses the entrepreneurial spirit and experience required at Bennett as a school uniquely "Built for What's Next". Heidi is a leader deeply aligned with our rigorous learning standards and ready to move our strategic priorities forward.

About Heidi Hutchison

Heidi joins us from the Friends School of Baltimore. Founded in 1784, Friends has operated for over 240 years as a prestigious, coeducational K-12 institution focused on cultivating critical thinking and real-world learning. Heidi has been an innovator at Friends, where she currently serves as the PK-8 Principal, leading a unified division of over 420 students and 90 faculty and staff. Her tenure there has been defined by transformative leadership and institutional growth, including:

- **Institutional Alignment:** Heidi successfully merged historically distinct divisions into a cohesive PK-8 program, aligning curriculum and leadership structures to enhance the student experience.
- **Enrollment & Pipeline Development:** She has been a primary architect of sustainable enrollment initiatives, integrating divisional programs to strengthen long-term student retention.
- **Facilities & Strategic Planning:** Heidi served as Co-Chair of the Board's Innovation Task Force for facilities optimization.
- **Lifelong Learning and Future-Ready:** A pioneer in both professional development and the use of emerging technologies, Heidi has utilized AI-powered operational tools to streamline school workflows, allowing educators to focus more on student engagement and academic outcomes.

Heidi's leadership is characterized by her genuine warmth, clear priorities, and a focus on the "joy of learning." Earlier in her career, she taught upper school project-based learning utilizing the "city as a classroom". She holds a Master's Degree in Education and School Leadership from the **University of Pennsylvania**, as well as a Bachelor's of Science in Education from the **University of Delaware**. Heidi is an avid reader, aspiring chef, dog lover, and nature enthusiast who enjoys pickleball and golf. She is already captivated by the energy and history around us in Chicago and our vibrant Fulton Market area.

A Global Search and Resounding Consensus

This appointment is the culmination of a rigorous **global search** facilitated by our partners at **Carney, Sandoe & Associates**. The process was comprehensive: more than 150 educational leaders engaged in the search, dozens of candidates were interviewed and thoroughly vetted before two finalists were invited to our campus. We are grateful that the culture and innovative approach at Bennett helped attract so many excellent candidates from around the world and across our entire country, too.

Feedback following Heidi's visit provided an overwhelming consensus. Of the faculty, staff, and parents/guardians surveyed, **92% of respondents** agreed that Heidi possesses the professional qualifications and leadership style to succeed at Bennett. Our partners at CS&A noted that such a high watermark of support is special and indicates a fantastic match between a leader and school.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone in our community who engaged in this rigorous and important process, including the Search Advisory Committee across our divisions and administration; the Search Committee of our Board; our Family Association; and all the teachers and staff who took part in meeting candidates.

Gratitude and Our Path Forward

Over the coming months, we will schedule times for Heidi to visit campus again and to continue to get to know all of us even better before her official start in July. As a first opportunity, please **Save the Date for May 13**, when Heidi will join us that day, including at our Community Address that evening.

We continue to be deeply grateful for the ongoing engagement of Jackie Miller, who was instrumental in the search, interview, and selection process while she continues in her position as Head of School this school year. Jackie will work closely with Heidi as a Senior Advisor through the entirety of next school year to ensure a seamless transition and a successful hand-off to Heidi over the course of the summer.

Please join me in congratulating Heidi and welcoming her to the Bennett community. Her heartfelt letter to you follows this announcement, too. We look forward to an exciting next chapter together at Bennett!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cameron Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cameron" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Smith".

Cameron Smith

Founder & CEO, Bennett Day School

Letter from Heidi Hutchison

Dear Bennett Day Community,

I am honored and humbled to be joining you as Head of School and Chief Operating Officer, and I could not be more excited for what lies ahead for this remarkable community.

When I visited Bennett, I came as a candidate. I left as someone who had witnessed something rare: a school where the mission is not something that lives in a document. It lives in classrooms, in hallways, and in the relationships between students and the adults who know and believe in them. The joy, curiosity, and sense of belonging I felt throughout my visit stayed with me long after I left, and it is a significant part of why I am so eager to begin on July 1.

The commitment to purposeful, personal, and project-based learning at Bennett, the belief that our job as educators is to teach students *how* to think, not *what* to think, and to nurture both the intellectual development and the full humanity of every child, is the work I have devoted my career to. I am so grateful to be continuing it alongside all of you.

To the students: you are the heart of everything that makes Bennett extraordinary, and getting to know each of you is what I am most looking forward to. Your curiosity, your creativity, and your willingness to take on real challenges in your learning inspire me, and I cannot wait to be part of your journey. I am here for you, and I promise to show up every day ready to learn right alongside you.

To the faculty and staff: your dedication to students is evident in everything you do. I am looking forward to learning from you, growing with you, and supporting the important work you bring to this community every day.

To the families: thank you for trusting Bennett with what matters most. I look forward to building relationships with each of you and to being a visible, engaged partner in your children's education.

To the Board: thank you for the confidence you have placed in me. I do not take it lightly, and I am committed to earning it every day.

I am deeply grateful to Cameron for his vision in building this school, for the warmth and intentionality he brought to this search, and for welcoming me so genuinely every step of the way. I also want to thank Jackie Miller for her leadership and her graciousness throughout this process. I look forward to learning from her in the months ahead.

I also cannot wait to explore the Fulton Market neighborhood and everything Chicago has to offer. I will be making that move with my husband, Andy, who is just as excited about this next chapter as I am. Our son, Gabe, will be finishing his senior year at Friends School of Baltimore, and we are savoring that last year with him before he heads off on his own adventure. Our daughter, Olivia, is graduating from college in just a few weeks, so this season is full of transitions and celebrations for our family. Getting to know a city and its people means being in close proximity, learning its history, its organizations, and the relationships that make a community come alive. I believe deeply in building authentic connections, and I intend to do that one conversation, one neighborhood, and one meal at a time!

Bennett is built for what's next. I cannot wait to help write that next chapter together.

With gratitude and excitement,



Heidi Hutchison