



## Announcement from Head of School Lisa Lyle

To the Members of the MICDS Community,

In early December, I shared with Board Chair Bill Polk '74 and Vice Chair Michelle Cohen '88 that as my husband, David, and I look ahead we have decided that June of 2019 is the right time, both professionally and personally, to end my tenure at MICDS. I have shared this news with the MICDS Board of Trustees, and it is with bittersweet emotion that I share it now with you all as well. At that point, I will have completed 12 years and three multi-year contracts, so the timing from that perspective feels right, and David—who's a bit older than I am—will be ready to retire.

David and I have been together now nearly 38 years—and at each career decision point he has made it possible for me to choose the very best fit. So when he asked that we think about going someplace new for his retirement years, I couldn't but say yes. Two of our three children will soon be living in San Diego, and Tucker is thriving in Chicago. Our house calls to us from the shores of Lake Champlain, and I miss my garden there. Most of you know that I taught French early in my career and David teaches Spanish. Together we have lived abroad and traveled extensively, so we are excited to see what adventures lie ahead. There is much to consider as I decide what my next step will be, and it might include continuing in education or transitioning to consulting. It's early in our decision process, and we will likely not know the title of this next chapter for several months.

I am announcing my decision now because I wanted to give the School the necessary time to search for the next head of school. The timing is especially important because it affords the Board and the community the opportunity to search for a new head before the ISACS year-long Accreditation Self-Study, which will help shape the next strategic plan. The School's reputation nationally is strong and growing; the physical plant and endowment have never been in better shape; and, it's hard to imagine a stronger faculty and administrative team.

The strong and abiding commitment to building a thriving, welcoming, inclusive multicultural school community, where every student and family is known and valued, has been reaffirmed and will continue to be a priority for the Board, faculty and staff, and all MICDS families. There is no doubt that there will be excellent candidates from whom to choose, and I am confident the next head of school will build upon our successes.

Coming to MICDS over a decade ago was like winning the lottery. The mission captured my imagination, and the community captured my heart. The Board's message in 2007 was both clear and compelling: take this good school and make it a great school! Together, we've made huge collective strides in that direction, and there is much to celebrate:

- From an admission standpoint, MICDS is attracting and enrolling increasingly strong and talented students. Students in the Class of 2017 collectively delivered the highest average ACT score since we began tracking this data, with our average test taker ranking in the 95th percentile of all high school students nationwide.
- From the MICDS Class of 2017, nearly half of the students are attending schools ranked "Most Competitive" by Barrons. This list includes Yale, MIT, Swarthmore, University of Pennsylvania, Bowdoin, Brown, Vanderbilt, Northwestern, Johns Hopkins, Washington University and more.
- Our student body is a thriving multicultural and diverse community, with 34% of students identifying as students of color, 65 metro zip codes represented, and 24% of students receiving 100% of demonstrated financial need. Today, 16% of our students speak one of 39 languages and dialects other than English in their home. Diversity of thought, learning styles, passions and strengths are also prevalent and valued.
- The faculty evaluation system now provides shared language about professional practice and serves to guide performance feedback, hiring and professional development for every faculty member. This drives faculty learning and STLinSTL, our summer faculty development conference.

- Our Lower School faculty have fully adopted Responsive Classroom®, an approach that builds community and sets the stage for great learning for each child.
- Our JK-12 department chairs have worked with their departments to ensure that their curriculum provides carefully scaffolded learning experiences, mapping out course standards to avoid gaps and redundancies, use instructional time well and assess learning effectively.
- Technology has deepened and extended our learning with the adoption of the one-to-one laptop initiative, which dates back to the fall of 2008.
- Athletically, since 2007, MICDS has brought home 30 state championships in 10 different sports and made 72 final four appearances in 17 different sports.
- Artistically gifted students have received numerous local, regional and national awards in the vocal, instrumental, performing and visual arts.
- We are in our final year of the highly successful five year \$90 million Bold Action Campaign. More than 1100 alumni, parents, former parents, faculty and other members of our community have contributed.
- In the past seven years, we have completed six major construction projects - each one industry-leading in its own right. Taken together, we now have academic and athletic facilities that are unmatched just about anywhere else nationally.

I am humbled by and deeply grateful to my colleagues - the administrative team, the entire faculty and staff, and all current and past board members - for their tireless dedication and insurmountable effort to help us achieve these results, and to the generous donors who have stepped up so boldly to ensure the future of the School. I am grateful to each and every parent, alum and member of the MICDS community; it has been a privilege to serve as head of school for over a decade. And most of all, I want to thank our incredible students - whose talent, passion, and commitment to learning is both the inspiration and reason for MICDS' remarkable success.

I am proud of the work that we have all done and confident in the course set by the board. I commend and thank Bill Polk '74 and Michelle Cohen '88, and the board chairs that came before, for their steadfast and courageous partnership. No one in my role could have asked for more, and I am truly thankful.

Next week, the School is hosting a coffee - Monday, January 29 at 7:30 am in the Presentation Room in Olson Hall - for any MICDS community members that would like to ask questions or discuss the transition with board leadership or me.

Finally, please remember that I will continue to serve loyally the MICDS community as head of school until my successor arrives in July 2019. And Ellie will continue to serve as School Dog until then, too. However, she's going to have to leave when we do! I know that she will miss each and every one of you as much as David and I will.

Warmly,

Lisa Lyle  
MICDS Head of School

### Statement from the MICDS Board of Trustees

To the Members of the MICDS Community,

I write to share that Lisa Lyle has announced her intention to end her tenure as MICDS head of school at the conclusion of the 2018-19 academic year, the conclusion of her third contract. Lisa has shared the news of her decision with the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff. The MICDS community will miss her bold, principled, and transformational leadership. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to thank Lisa for her outstanding leadership and express our deep admiration and gratitude for her devotion to our School.

In her role as head of school, Lisa has enhanced MICDS' position as a national leader in independent school pedagogy, curriculum, and academic rigor. She has recruited an accomplished faculty committed to great teaching and learning and built a deep and talented senior leadership team. In combination, these efforts have translated into extraordinary success in the academic performance of our students and the college placement outcomes of our graduates. She actively committed to attracting a broad spectrum of exceptional students, bringing ever increasing talent and diversity to MICDS. The Board, school leadership, faculty and staff, and the MICDS community remain steadfast in our commitment to ensuring a collaborative and inclusive school community where every student and family is known and valued.

Lisa's tireless efforts working with MICDS alumni, parents, and friends on the Bold Action Campaign have resulted in one of the largest and most successful capital campaigns in independent school history. As a result, the School has completed an ambitious new building program featuring remarkable new facilities, including McDonnell Hall and Brauer Hall STEM Building, Steward Family Aquatic Center, Ron Holtman Stadium, and Holekamp Track and Field Stadium, all while carefully managing our carbon footprint. Our endowment is now among the largest of any independent day school in the United States, and our financial condition is very sound. The timing also works well for the new head to commence the self study, accreditation and strategic planning process soon after his or her contract begins.

Lisa's success over the past decade bears witness to the unassailable fact she has met the difficult challenge of being both a great manager and a great leader. With her eyes firmly fixed on the School's Mission and Strategic Plan, Lisa has tackled ambitious, challenging goals, collaborated with key constituencies, adapted in the face of challenges, held standards high, and achieved evident success across key school performance measures. In doing so, she continually challenges herself with the essential question "Is this the right thing for our School and our students?"

While Lisa and David's decision to seek new adventures will be a loss for our School and the St. Louis community, she will be departing at a time when MICDS is strong and thriving. Thanks in large part to her leadership and dedicated service to MICDS, the Board of Trustees is confident that MICDS will attract another extraordinary head to lead us to continued success in the coming years. By letting us know of her plans now, Lisa has given us the time to proceed with a careful and systematic approach to recruit and onboard her replacement, a process that often takes up to 18 months in the typical independent school.

Lisa's last day at MICDS will be June 30, 2019, after the completion of her current contract. In the weeks ahead, the MICDS Board of Trustees will begin planning for the always-anticipated transition independent schools like ours face as leaders change over time. To initiate this effort, the Board has approved the formation of a search committee, and I am pleased to announce that immediate past MICDS Board Chair and current MICDS parent Julie Lilly '86 has been appointed as the search committee chair. Julie and I will keep the MICDS community updated on the search process in the weeks and months ahead, and a dedicated [resource page on the MICDS website](#) will have updated communications as available, including a list of answers to questions you may have about Lisa's announcement. As is the School's practice, the search committee will actively seek input and participation from the MICDS community.

As the end of Lisa's committed term approaches we will organize various opportunities to celebrate all that Lisa has accomplished at MICDS and to wish her and David well in their next adventure. In the meantime, please join me in thanking Lisa for all that she has done for our School. We have been extraordinarily fortunate to have Lisa's steady hand at the tiller, and the Trustees of MICDS, both past and present, have been privileged to have had the opportunity to work with her.

Sincerely,

Bill Polk '74  
Chair, MICDS Board of Trustees

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