



PLURALISTIC SCHOOL ONE
Independent K-6 education in Santa Monica

Interim Head of School Search: Frequently Asked Questions

Leadership transitions are a time of great excitement... and some uncertainty. As trustees – many of us parents – we share your hopes and anxieties about what this transition might mean for our school, but we are optimistic about the future of PS1 and vow to work as hard as we can to find the right leader to succeed our Founding Head.

In our effort to be clear and transparent, we've assembled a list of common questions and answers about the Interim Head of School search. We will update this list periodically as particular concerns might arise and our next steps come into focus. Please do not hesitate to direct any questions about the search to headsearch@psone.org.

Q. Why is PS1 seeking an Interim Head instead of a long-term appointee?

A. It is common for independent schools to appoint an Interim Head following the departure of a long-serving Head of School or a Founding Head of School. In the case of PS1, we have both. The general concern is that the successor might struggle to find their footing in the immediate wake of such an influential leader. In particular, they can feel trapped between those who believe they are "moving too fast" and others who might expect dramatic changes. An Interim Head of School will provide the school community an opportunity to adjust to Joel's absence, and it will ensure that PS1 has a year of reflection and preparation in advance of welcoming a new long-term appointee.

Q. What is the role of the Interim Head of School?

A. The interim provides stability and leadership during the Head of School transition and ensures that PS1 remains focused on its primary mission: ensuring that each student is challenged and supported appropriately in their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. Specifically, the Interim oversees the day-to-day operations of the school. The Board may ask the Interim to focus on a handful of projects to help PS1 maintain its growth as an institution and/or help prepare the school for the arrival of the long-term appointee.



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Q. What is the process for selecting the Interim Head?

A. After collecting and synthesizing input from the school community, the Search Committee – in partnership with Butler/White Strategies – will craft a position announcement, advertise the opportunity, and begin targeted outreach to contacts and prospective candidates across the country. Butler/White will screen the candidates throughout the summer and present a slate of the most qualified applicants to the Search Committee for review in the early fall. The Search Committee will select one or more finalist candidates to meet with additional trustees and key members of the PSI community. The Search Committee will recommend one candidate to the Board of Directors, which will vote to formalize the appointment.

Q. What is the schedule for the Interim Head of School search?

A. The Board of Directors plans to announce the Interim Head of School in October or November of 2021.

Q. Who will be on the Search Committee? How will they be selected?

A. Given the abbreviated timeline and focused nature of the Interim Head search, the Search Committee will be relatively small and exclusively comprised of trustees. The Board of Directors will appoint the Search Committee.

Q. What is Butler/White Strategies?

A. Butler/White Strategies is an executive search and consulting firm that guides independent schools through leadership transitions. After interviewing several consultants in March 2021, the Board of Directors selected Butler/White based on their experience, flexibility, forward-thinking philosophy, and familiarity with PSI. The firm's principals, Jo Butler and Zachary White, did an outstanding job with the search for our new Associate Head of School, Jij de Jesus. During their 20+ years of combined experience in the field, Jo and Zach have led Head of School searches for more than 75 institutions across the country, including The John Thomas Dye School and Marlborough School. You can read more about the Butler/White's people and approach here: <https://www.butlerwhite.com/>.



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Q. What is Butler/White's role in the search?

Jo and Zach will advise the Search Committee regarding the design and execution of the search with an eye toward best practice in the industry and the unique needs of PS1. They and their team will provide extra support around communications, candidate inquiries, and interview logistics. They will play a crucial role in sourcing and screening candidates and coaching the Search Committee through the evaluation and selection process. The Committee will rely on Butler/White's expertise, advice, and perspective throughout the process, but all final decisions will be made by the Search Committee and the Board of Directors.

Q. What will the Search Committee look for in an Interim Head of School?

A. We are seeking an Interim Head with significant experience as a school leader and who is drawn to the mission, values, and culture of PS1. We hope to identify several outstanding candidates who have experience serving as an Interim Head of School and are familiar with the unique challenges of the role.

Q. What role will parents, faculty, and other stakeholders play in the Interim Head search?

A. With the help of the consulting firm Butler/White Strategies, we will collect input from all constituents to help the Search Committee identify the future leadership needs of PS1 and begin mapping the opportunities and challenges our school is likely to face over the coming years. To help protect the privacy of the candidates, many particulars of the search will need to remain confidential, but the Board and the Search Committee will provide regular updates on the process and continue to address new questions as they arise. We will make every effort to ensure stakeholders have a chance to meet the Interim Head well before they begin their tenure on July 1, 2022.



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Q. How is the Interim Head search different from the long-term Head of School search?

A. Our priority is the search for an Interim Head of School, and we have not yet determined a specific process or timeline for the selection of our next ongoing leader. Our best estimate is that the long-term Head of School search will begin in early 2022 and conclude in September or October of that year (with the appointee joining PSI on July 1, 2023). Given the larger scale and impact of the long-term search, we expect that the process will have many more opportunities for engagement for both candidates and members of the PSI community.

Q. What role will the Interim play in selecting the ongoing Head of School?

A. The Interim will not be involved in the selection of the ongoing Head of School but will play an integral role in ensuring a smooth transition to the long-term appointee at the end of the 2022-23 school year.

Q. Will the Interim Head be a candidate for the long-term Head of School position?

A. Most Interim Heads have extensive Head of School experience, including service as Interims, and many have a stated preference to serve exclusively in an interim capacity. It is unlikely that the Interim Head will be a candidate for the long-term position, but our ultimate goal is to select the best candidate or candidates for the Interim and ongoing Head of School positions, and we are eager to keep our options open, especially this early in the process.

Q. What role will Joel play in the Interim search?

A. As the school's founder and, for the past half-century, Head of School, Joel is uniquely positioned to understand the PSI and the role of its chief executive. The Search Committee will rely heavily on Joel's input and perspective as it defines the position and builds a profile of the ideal candidate. Joel will also serve as an invaluable ally in promoting the opportunity and as a source of wisdom and insight for the final candidate(s). It is not typical, however, for an outgoing Head of School to play a formal role in the selection of their successor. Joel will



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not serve on the Search Committee or participate in the evaluation and selection of candidates – a responsibility formally entrusted to the Board of Directors.

Q. What will you do to ensure the search is inclusive and unbiased?

A. Ensuring a diverse, inclusive, unbiased process is a priority for the Board and the Search Committee. One reason we selected Butler/White was their commitment to sourcing diverse candidate pools and rethinking key parts of a search – from the position announcement to interview practices – with an eye toward reducing bias and maximizing inclusion.

Q. Will the Interim Head of School be charged with making significant changes at PS1?

A. The Board of Directors, with input from our community, will provide the Interim with a clear set of priorities for the 2022-23 school year. At this time, we do not foresee the need for major changes to the core programs at PS1. The Interim will maintain the values, mission, and program during their tenure and position the future Head of School with the task of helping set a new direction as they and the Board see fit.