

Dear PSI Pluralistic School Community,

"Two score and ten years ago," Ellie and I brought forth to the community of Santa Monica, a new school, conceived on the joint principles of both independence and interdependence, and dedicated not to the proposition that all men are created equal but rather to the proposition that each person should be treated fairly and well, and that no one would be marginalized.

We would focus on what made each child unique as we uncovered ways to honor the amazing differences among us at the same time as we embraced the humanity that we share. We would always nurture individual talents and learning styles. "In order to form a more perfect union," parents and schools would form a bond and partnership to raise children together. We called the school PSI Pluralistic School. Pluralism is our national motto; we believe then and now that the education of young children should be organized around this principle if we are to ever move from aspirational to achievement across the United States. What developed was a magic sauce with an unlimited supply of ingredients mixed together by those who became part of our school at any given time, building on the recipes that had come before.

I am confident that everyone reading this letter sees PSI as a strong, stable, intentional, consistent, successful institution that has stayed true to its founding mission of pluralism over all its history. It is in our name and in our DNA. I love that students and parents actively participating in any decade of the school speak of it in much the same way as have others from any other decade. We wanted to help build a second home for people – children and adults alike. We have succeeded.

Today I make an announcement about my future plans to everyone on our mailing list. I have shared with the PSI Board of Directors that next year, the 2021–22 school year, will be my last serving as the Head of School. For those who have known me through thick and thin, and for those who realize that I will be stepping down three months after my 75th birthday, I trust that this news will be greeted with reactions ranging from "What took you so long?" to "Congratulations."

I began my PSI journey as the youngest adult. I will end it knowing that the school is older than most of the adults who occupy our campus when there is no pandemic! It was much harder to create this inclusive community than it has been to sustain it. Why? Because the foundation and brand are solid; the values are rock steady; the system, methods, principles, traditions, and policies are firmly in place; and the yearnings and strivings and shared goals are embraced by all.

The average length of service as a Head of School in our 2000 member NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) is five years. There have been fifteen L.A. County School Superintendents since we started PSI. And I will be stepping down after 51 years at the helm of PSI. The only handwritten sign we had posted out in front of the school in its early years was "Everything worthwhile takes time." I guess I took my own advice literally!

Who is PSI? For a small school, we have so many who have been with us for five, ten, twenty, and thirty years. (Nearly 30

current staff and faculty members fall into those categories.) Our Senior Administrative Team is strong. Our Board of Directors is strong. Our faculty is strong. Our administrative staff is strong as is our child care staff. Our finances are strong. Our campus is beautiful and functional at the same time. Our parents make this school their school and not just the school for their kids. Volunteerism, even through COVID, has been strong. The spirit is strong. Our kids are happy and engaged. We have so much to build upon going forward.

Our leadership team will be enhanced next year with the hiring of our first ever Associate Head of School. This represents a change in our organizational model which will be continued for years to come. Jij de Jesus (pronounced Jay) begins his service in two months and will become my partner in the oversight and running of the whole school next year. The Senior Administrative Team, the Associate Head of School, and I will determine specific areas of responsibility as we go forward.

To review then:

1. 2021–22 school year—next year is my last as Head of School—my favorite word in education is the word "yet." Whenever an adult tells me that a child cannot do something, I add the word 'yet' to the conversation. Today I write you all that "I am not gone ... yet."
2. The 2022–23 school year—I am retired—Our Board, its Search Committee, and a national consultant will be involved in the hiring of new leadership for the 2022–23 school year ... and beyond. What about me once I have relieved myself of the day to day pressures of running the school? At this point, I am thinking of it as the first sabbatical I will have ever taken, and it will be a permanent sabbatical. I hope my advice and guidance can be called upon after I formally retire. Ellie and I gave birth to PSI 50 years ago after having known each other for only four months. I will ALWAYS care about our child (and also our three offspring, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren)!! I am not going anywhere. I am also confident that there are many terrific chapters still to be written about our wonderful school.

Abraham Lincoln went on to write in his Gettysburg Address "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." The same is true for all of you reading this note from me. We will always remember what we did and are doing in our time at PSI Pluralistic School. I am so grateful to each of you for the indelible mark you are leaving on our campus and community. People who join our school in the years to come will benefit from all that you have given and are giving to make our school an exemplar of pluralism. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Onward.



Joel Pelcyger  
Head of School

Dear PS1 Pluralistic School Community,

I write today with the bittersweet news that Head of School Joel Pelcyger has informed the PS1 Pluralistic School Board of Directors that he intends to retire from the Head of School role at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. The Board has accepted his decision with deep gratitude. We look forward to celebrating Joel and his profound impact on PS1 and collaborating with the community as we embrace this leadership transition coinciding with our 50th Anniversary celebration. We hope you will take a few moments to read these messages from Joel and me.

**Change.** Exciting, unsettling, inescapable. This year, through PS1's curricular focus on change, our children learned that change is a natural part of the life cycle. Change fuels progress; it's to be celebrated more than feared. Through a year of upheaval in many aspects of our lives, every one of us has demonstrated resilience and adaptability—and grit!—in the face of great uncertainty. As a school community, together we navigated constantly changing circumstances, emerging stronger, wiser, and more deeply connected to our values.

Now, for the first time ever, our community is about to experience a change of leadership. With Joel stepping down from his Head of School role at the end of next year, we are embarking on a period of transition that is exciting, unsettling and, yes, inescapable. Quite simply, it's difficult to imagine PS1 without Joel at the helm. However, the vision of one in 1971 is now the reality of many in 2021. As a very young man, Joel envisioned a better way to educate children—through empathy, innovation, and collaboration—and, in doing so, to better society as a whole. Every day for the past 50 years, Joel has welcomed families in the morning, interacted with students throughout the day, and worked well into the evening to ensure that PS1 provides an ever-evolving pluralistic education in a joyful, engaging environment. As more and more families became interested in sending their children to this innovative school, Joel led the charge to expand the physical footprint of the school, slowly acquiring and developing the real estate to match the demand and the vision. Joel and Ellie met in May of 1971 and, four months later, they opened PS1 with twelve students. Now there are more than 200 children playing, creating, and learning every day on an extraordinary urban campus in the heart of Santa Monica. Our thriving community has held fast to our guiding principles for 50 years and counting.

As we continue to evolve, we will always stay true to who we are and mindful of where we began. At a gathering of past PS1 Board Chairs this past week, the support for Joel's work and the community's lasting connection to the school was evident. One Board member summed it up beautifully as he reflected on the PS1 community past and present, "We have the same heart."

The PS1 Board of Directors, like any independent school Board of Directors, is charged with hiring the next Head of School. The Board has started this process. We have retained national executive search consultants Jo Butler and Zachary White of Butler/White Strategies who assisted in our recent search for our first Associate Head of School. The Board is in the process of forming a Search Committee. We will invite members from all school constituencies to share their voices at key moments during the search process. We will keep our school community informed of our progress, and retain archived communications, at a new Head of School Search section of the school's website.

This is a profound moment for our school. I have been a parent at PS1 for 12 years, with five more to go. I've served as a Board member for nine years, the last two as Board Chair. I, along with my fellow Board members, feel immense gratitude toward Joel. In addition, we appreciate your trust in the Board as we take on the responsibility of hiring a new Head of School.

With mutual support and a shared dedication to our school's mission and vision, Joel, the school's Senior Administrative Team, and the PS1 Board of Directors will guide the school into its next phase.

We will also draw upon the support of this exceptional community, which inspires us to be the best version of a Board that we can be. "Celebrate the Many; Build One" is particularly fitting for the year ahead. Together we will celebrate 50 years as a school, the 50-year legacy of Joel's leadership, our beautiful community that has endured a year like no other, and all the families who have come before us. And for all of us who are together now, experiencing this unique opportunity for change and growth, we have so much to be proud of and ever more to look forward to as we prepare for the next 50 years at PS1.

Sincerely,



Anna Tran Reyna  
Board Chair  
P '16, P '22, P '26