



**SANFORD**  
S C H O O L

**MARK ANDERSON**  
HEAD OF SCHOOL

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March 13, 2019

Dear PAIS members,

Greetings! I wanted to provide an update on the work of the PAIS Board. Over the past several months Board members have been engaged in thoughtful discussions about the future direction and leadership of our Association.

Last year (October 18, 2018), the PAIS and ADVIS Boards sent a message to our member schools about an exciting joint conversation in which the Associations were engaging in generative discussions about ways we might partner and possibly merge. The goal of these conversations was to explore ways to better meet the ADVIS and PAIS missions on behalf of our members.

The conversations have produced much positive support. This is an idea that is widely heralded as one with many possibilities. That is good news!

The challenge, however, is that the process of merging—or even the process of deciding to merge—takes more than a few months. While our Associations continue to explore this opportunity, the PAIS Board decided to extend our discussion into the 2019-2020 school year, so that we could make our most thoughtful, well-researched decision.

With Linda Phelps' retirement at the end of June 30, 2019, the Board decided to hire an interim executive director. After interviewing several interested and extremely qualified candidates, the PAIS Board voted to hire Gary Niels to step into this leadership role. Gary accepted the position immediately and is delighted to continue the work the Board has begun while also leading the Association forward in the good work that is already being done.

Gary served as Head of Winchester Thurston School for 16 years and is currently serving as President of The Neighborhood Academy, a grades 6 through 12 school for students from low income families in Pittsburgh. Through these roles, Gary has extensive experience with Pennsylvania independent schools. Read more about Gary on the attached resume. Gary will begin serving as PAIS interim executive director on July 1, 2019.

These are exciting times for our Association. Please join me in thanking Linda for her tremendous service to PAIS and our schools and welcoming Gary to our PAIS team. You may reach Gary at [gniels@paispa.org](mailto:gniels@paispa.org).

All the best,

Mark J. Anderson  
President, PAIS Board of Directors

P.S. Please save the date: On April 29th, we will hold our PAIS Annual Meeting at The Radnor Hotel in Radnor, PA. In addition to our meeting business, we will honor Linda Phelps and celebrate her outstanding tenure and leadership of PAIS. I hope to see many PAIS school leaders in attendance.

*No talent lies latent.*

# Gary John Niels

*Proven leader with a track record of programmatic innovation, record enrollment, strategic planning, fund raising success, faculty stewardship, leadership development, community engagement and brand differentiation.*

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## President 2018 - 2019

THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACADEMY

A grades 6 through 12 day school for low-income African American students

## Head of School 2002 - 2018

WINCHESTER THURSTON SCHOOL

- Led the creation of City As Our Campus program, now nationally recognized as the most advanced community-based learning program among NAIS schools.
- Achieved nine years of the highest enrollment in 128-year school history
- Built an Advancement Office that raised \$50 million through two campaigns and the annual fund.
  - Awarded Edward E. Ford Leadership Grant and the John Malone Family Foundation Grant; for four years was the only NAIS school to have received both prestigious awards
  - Doubled the endowment
  - Grew faculty participation in the Annual Fund from 60% to 100% for eight consecutive years
- Composed three different strategic plans that included significant programmatic, enrollment, financial, master plan and facilities strategies
  - Built a new Upper School on the City Campus and a new Campus Center on the North Hills Campus, an all-weather surface athletic field. Renovated the theater, athletic center, and playgrounds.
  - Developed an Equity and Inclusion Statement that resulted in course and programmatic initiatives and the hiring of an Equity and Inclusion Director.
- Formed Advisory Board of regional luminaries to inform and inspire our vision
- Pioneered a new teacher development initiative that implemented strategies based on proven ways that teachers actually develop and improve

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## OTHER POSITIONS

Assistant Head of School

Upper School Director

Dean of Students

Chaplain

Residential Summer Study Director

Regional Director

Teacher, Coach, Dorm Master

Hawken School, Cleveland, OH - 5 yrs.

St. Andrews School, Boca Raton, FL - 8 yrs.

St. Andrews School, Boca Raton, FL

Woodberry Forest School, Orange, VA - 4 yrs.

Woodberry Forest School, Orange, VA

FOCUS, Baltimore, MD - 5 yrs.

Avon Old Farms School, Avon, CT - 2 yrs.

## CONTACT

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Niels.Gary@gmail.com

5715 Elgin Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15206

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## EDUCATION

*Master of Arts in Education Administration*

Klingenstein Fellow Teachers College Columbia University

*Master of Theological Studies*

Regent College, Vancouver, B.C.

*Bachelor of Arts*

University of Maryland, College Park, MD

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## PERSONAL

*Married* Elizabeth B.

Patterson, Mental Health

Therapist, Health

Teacher, Field Hockey

and Lacrosse Coach,

Two Sport College All

American

*Children:*

Christopher (30), Bill (29),

Brawley (10), and Morrow (5)

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## Interests

Faith and Religion, Fitness and Health, Sports of All Kinds, and Non-Fiction Reading

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## HONORS

*Board of Trustees Name the First Endowed Chair –  
The Gary J. Niels Chair for City As Our Campus*  
-Winchester Thurston School

*Excellence in Teaching Award renamed The Gary J.  
Niels Excellence in Teaching Award*  
-Saint Andrews School

*Distinguished Alumni Service Awards and Golden  
Falcon Award*  
-The Peddie School

*Klingenstein Fellow*  
*Thesis Topic: Academic Practices, School Culture  
and Cheating Behavior*  
-Teachers College, Columbia Univ.

*Reginald Van Trump Truitt Award*  
*Scholastic achievement and Team Performance*  
-University of Maryland

*Honorable Mention All America Lacrosse*  
*Co-Captain, NCAA Championship Lacrosse Team*  
-University of Maryland

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## PRESENTATIONS

*Difficult Decisions*  
NAIS Annual Conference, 2017

*The Quest for Authenticity and Differentiation: A  
Strategic Planning Toolkit*

CASE NAIS conference, 2016

*City As Our Campus, Winchester Thurston School*  
Innovation Summit, Hathaway Brown, 2010

*Shifting Paradigms: The Upper School Two Approaches*  
NAIS Annual Conference, 2004

*Academic Practices, School Culture and Honor Codes*  
NAIS Annual Conference, 2000

*Connecting the Advisor System to The School's  
Mission Statement*

Co-Presenter, ISACS Annual Conference, 1999

*Issues of Academic Integrity in Schools*  
Tennessee Association of Independent Schools,  
Honor Codes, 1997

*Establishing a School Honor System*  
Florida Council of Independent Schools  
Annual Conference, 1991

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## PUBLICATIONS

“Summative Evaluation vs. Formative  
Development, A New Look at Developing and  
Paying Great Teachers”

*Independent School Magazine*, Fall, 2012

“Why Education Reform Isn't Working”  
*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 3, 2006

“Don't Let College Invade High School”  
*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 1, 2005

“Teaching to the Brain; the Development of the  
Imagination”  
*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 29, 2004

“At the Core of Quality Education: Freedom and  
Responsibility”  
*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 2, 2003

Honor Codes: What We're Missing  
*NAIS Website*, February 2003

“Corporate Cheating; Lessons from the Classroom”  
*Sunday Forum, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 4, 2002

Academic Practice, School Culture and Cheating Behavior  
*Klingenstein Fellowship, Teachers College Columbia  
University*

“Best Practices: An Analysis of Teacher Diversity  
in Eleven NYC Independent Schools” and “Three  
Case Studies: The Wingate School, the Quaker  
School and Heights Academy”  
*The Colors of Excellence: Hiring and Retaining Teachers of  
Color*, By Pearl Rock Kane and Alfonso J. Orsini, Contributing  
Researcher and Writer

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## OTHER LEADERSHIP ROLES

Allegheny Conference

*Board of Directors*

Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools  
*Board Member*

Pittsburgh Consortium of Independent Schools  
*President*

NAIS Advisory Board on College Admission

Chagrin Valley Conference, Cleveland, Ohio  
*Commissioner*