

January 1, 2018

Dear Mark and Members of the PAIS Board of Directors:

I have always put the interests of PAIS before those of my own; today is no different. After careful assessment of and with consideration to a conversation I initiated last summer and subsequent discussions, this letter reflects my decision to end, what will be my twenty-seven-year tenure, as Executive Director of Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools effective June 30, 2019.

Over the years I have had the privilege of working with amazingly wise and compassionate people: among them, Board Members, PAIS staff, CFA Commissioners, Heads of School and their school communities. I cherish the moments I have experienced and the friendships I have established through the years. Through the dedicated work of many individuals, PAIS has accomplished the sometimes seemingly un-accomplishable. One such event was the merger of PAIS and PAPAS. In 1992, schools feared a merger of Pennsylvania Association of Private Academic Schools (PAPAS), the accrediting body, with Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools, the body, founded in the 1960's on the premise of protecting independent schools from governmental intrusion, would end independent school accreditation in Pennsylvania. In 2006, the merger of PAIS and PAPAS became official. And after years of careful cultivation of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education officials, PAIS and its Commission for Accreditation was successfully approved and recognized as a Preschool through Grade 12 accrediting agency in the Commonwealth.

Although my formal term was to begin July 1, 1992, I began some of my responsibilities in February while still serving in my role in an independent school. The former Executive Director of PAIS presented me with a cardboard box approximately 18 inches square by about 8 inches deep – that was PAIS – and he gave me the advice, “I leave for Maine prior to Memorial Day and return after Labor Day; you will need to dedicate no more than 12 to 14 hours a week during the remainder of the year to the work of schools.” Never have I experienced his advice! PAPAS was a successful volunteer organization from which I inherited a small two-drawer filing cabinet containing accredited schools' information in a tiny, one-room office in a member school. The Commission for Accreditation continues to this day to be approved by the State Board of Education and recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to accredit independent schools in lieu of licensure and is a respected member of the NAIS Commission on Accreditation, soon to become the International Council for the Advancement of Independent School Accreditation that will continue to monitor, “accredit”, and approve the independent school accrediting agencies. Combined membership of both PAIS and PAPAS in 1992 was a scant more than 64 member schools. To date, PAIS membership has climbed to 112 schools. Who would have ever imagined the PAIS “box” growing to a full office location housing a small conference center and an association staff of five, and providing the services of legislative affairs, accreditation, and professional learning.

They say, “Timing is everything.” PAIS has grown in membership and in services it provides to schools and their communities. This becomes an appropriate time for the PAIS Board to consider new leadership for the Association. As a result of a recent Design Session, PAIS is poised to embark on a new strategic plan and the time for a new State Application and the PAIS review by the soon to be international council are nearing. It is time for new leadership to bring new vision and transformative ideas and guidance to the Association.

It has been a great honor, both personally and professionally, for me to have served PAIS. I am committed to serving and supporting the Association during the next 18 months and welcome the opportunity to support a successful transition to new leadership.

With warm regards,

Linda L. Phelps
PAIS Executive Director