

March 7, 2024

Dear Austin Waldorf Community

On behalf of the Austin Waldorf School Board of Trustees and the Search Committee, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Michelle Purghart has been enthusiastically recommended by the Search Committee and unanimously consented by the Austin Waldorf Board of Trustees to serve as our next Head of School, beginning July 1, 2024.

Dr. Purghart holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of California, Irvine and a Master of Education in Curriculum Development and Instructional Emphasis from University of San Diego. She received her Bachelor of Education from McGill University. Previously Dr. Purghart was the Head of School at Charleston Collegiate School in Charleston, South Carolina, Head of School/Director at Danube International School in Vienna, Austria, Principal of Maranatha High School in Pasadena, California and principal of Holy Family College Preparatory in Glendale, California.

Dr Purghart asked that we share this message with the community as part of the announcement: "I am honored and excited to be named the next Head of Austin Waldorf School. I enjoyed hearing the passion for the school and students throughout my visit, and I thank everyone for welcoming my son and me with such love and sincerity. After two days on campus, it felt like home.

"It was inspirational to see a community that invests so deeply in the lives of students and creates such meaningful partnerships with parents. I felt the strong sense of community in each interaction, and so many of you that I had the pleasure of speaking with touched my heart. I appreciated the authentic and candid conversations I had with students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, members of the Search Committee, and Board of Trustees. Each of you strengthened my conviction that I belonged at Austin Waldorf.

"I am humbled to be a part of the Austin Waldorf family, and I cannot wait to join you in your important work. I am eager to continue the conversations we began two weeks ago, as I learn more about the history and traditions that make Austin Waldorf a very special school community. I also look forward to building a close working relationship with the Pedagogical Leader and the College of Teachers, while leading us forward as a beacon of Waldorf Education in North America."

## **THE SEARCH PROCESS**

Dr. Purghart's selection follows a comprehensive and inclusive process that began in Fall 2023 and was led by the Search Committee which was composed of five College of Teachers representatives and five Board of Trustees representatives. We received 23 applicants for the position, interviewed the top 10 candidates, and selected 4 finalists from the interviews.

The finalists visited Austin Waldorf in mid-February, each spending two days meeting the various constituents of our community. A Search Committee member attended each of the meetings, observing the interactions and also received valuable and thoughtful feedback via survey and email from across the community. The Search Committee then concluded each visit with a final 2-hour interview of the candidate.

Thank you to all who participated in the process and shared your valuable feedback. This was a comprehensive evaluation that included input from across our community and we are proud and appreciative of the enthusiastic engagement of so many.

After deep reflection, collaborative discussion, and thoughtful consideration, the Search

Committee found that Dr. Purghart stood out from an impressive group of candidates as having the experience, skills, and qualities essential to lead our school into a successful next chapter. These are a select few of the many thoughts shared about her demonstrated strengths and experience:

- She has demonstrated experience overseeing and addressing organizational needs of an independent school with a growing student population.
- She is discerning and has led strategic initiatives while at the same time unifying school constituencies through change.
- She demonstrates successful fundraising skills both within and outside the organization in several settings, having contributed to positive and improved financial positions in each of her past leadership positions.
- She looks to work in partnership and is committed to collaborating with pedagogical leaders and faculty committees.
- She is capable of making timely decisions and moving at speed when speed is required, yet she has a deep appreciation of when to slow down in order to receive feedback and gain alignment.
- She will be an inspiring and effective storyteller for the school, not only internally, but also across the greater Austin area, the State of Texas, North America and Internationally.
- She is familiar with Waldorf Pedagogy and is committed to furthering her understanding through completing Waldorf training as mutually agreed with the College of Teachers during her first year at Austin Waldorf.

We express heartfelt gratitude to each of the candidates that expressed such high interest in our school and could have each contributed in their own meaningful and valuable ways should they have been selected. We also express deep gratitude to the members of the Search Committee for their tireless dedication throughout the search process.

The Search Committee will host open community sessions following Spring Break to answer any questions and receive feedback relating to the search.

As we proceed as the third generation at Austin Waldorf School, we are confident that Dr. Purghart is the leader who will allow our school to continue to flourish and we are thrilled that she is joining us for these next steps along our journey.

Please join us in warmly welcoming Dr. Purghart to the Austin Waldorf School community.

Warm regards,

Bryan Carruthers  
President, Board of Trustees

Tina DeSaussure  
College of Teachers and  
Co-Chair Head of School  
Search Committee

Micah Nicolo  
Board of Trustees and  
Co-Chair Head of School  
Search Committee

This message, along with updates on Dr. Purghart's transition to Austin Waldorf School in the coming months, can be found on the [Head of School Search webpage](#).

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