



Saint Philomena School

OF THE SACRED HEART

HEAD OF SCHOOL

PORTSMOUTH, RHODE ISLAND | POSITION BEGINS JULY 1, 2027

THE OPPORTUNITY

Saint Philomena School of the Sacred Heart (the “School”) seeks an inspiring, mission-driven leader to serve as its next Head of School. This is an extraordinary opportunity to lead a distinctive Catholic, independent, Sacred Heart school with a strong sense of mission, a talented faculty and staff, deeply committed families, and an educational philosophy centered on the formation of the whole child.

Founded in 1953 by the Faithful Companions of Jesus in the Diocese of Providence, Saint Philomena School has evolved into a widely recognized Catholic, independent, Sacred Heart school serving more than 450 students from preschool through Grade 8. Today, the School is a member of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, joining 25 Catholic schools across the United States and Canada committed to educating young people through the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart education.



The School's mission provides a clear and compelling foundation for the educational experience; to foster the courage and confidence of children to discover, develop and use their God-given gifts and talents to transform the world for good. Saint Philomena School seeks to educate the whole person: heart, mind, body, and spirit. Its Catholic, Sacred Heart identity is woven throughout the life of the School and informs how students learn, how adults relate to one another, and how the community understands its responsibility to the wider world.

The next Head will inherit a school with considerable momentum and a strong foundation. The Board of Trustees assumed governance of the School and its non-profit corporation while orchestrating the School's simultaneous acquisition of the 26-acre waterfront campus in 2021. At the same time, Saint Philomena School formally joined the Network of Sacred Heart Schools. In 2023, the School launched a new strategic vision designed to guide its development toward its 75th anniversary and beyond.

The next Head will have the opportunity to build on this foundation and help define Saint Philomena School's next chapter. The leader will work closely with the Board, faculty, staff, families, alumni, and Sacred Heart Network to strengthen the School's academic program, deepen its mission, support faculty excellence, sustain enrollment and financial health, and ensure that Saint Philomena School remains dedicated to preparing our students for lives rooted in our values of faith, intellect, service, community and wisdom.

For an educator drawn to the formation of children and the ministry of Catholic education in the context of the Sacred Heart education, Saint Philomena School offers the opportunity to lead with faith, purpose, excellence and steadfast personal commitment to the mission.

ABOUT SAINT PHILOMENA



Saint Philomena School of the Sacred Heart is a Catholic, independent, Sacred Heart School in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, serving more than 450 students from preschool through Grade 8. Students come from 22 communities throughout Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. The School employs approximately 50 faculty and staff members, including 32 teaching faculty, half of whom hold advanced degrees. Its educational approach is developmental and student-centered, attending to the needs of young children from early learning through the important transitions of the middle school years.

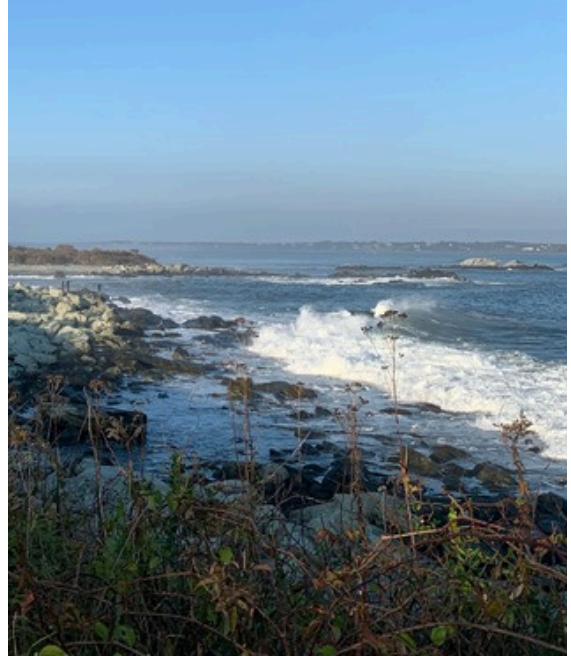
The School is located on a beautiful 26-acre campus along the shores of Narragansett Bay. The campus includes six buildings, athletic fields and courts, playgrounds, outdoor amphitheater, prayer garden, library and technology center, and extensive outdoor classroom and nature trail designed to encourage exploration, reflection, movement, and play, connecting the life of the School to the natural world around it.

Saint Philomena School's educational program is intentionally student-centered and developmental. From the earliest years through middle school, educators attend to students' intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development. The School's academic philosophy is grounded in the belief that education is a transformational process that should form the whole person and help young people develop the skills, attitudes, and virtues necessary to live lives of integrity and contribute meaningfully to the world.

The School has been recognized twice as a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School of Excellence and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). It is also a member of the National Catholic Educational Association, the Independent Schools Association of Rhode Island, and the Network of Sacred Heart Schools. The School joined the Sacred Heart Network in 2021 and launched a strategic vision in 2023. In 2026, the School successfully completed the ten year NEASC accreditation process and will complete its five year Sacred Heart Commission on Goals process for continued sponsorship with the Society of the Sacred Heart. As Saint Philomena School approaches its 75th anniversary in the 2028-2029 school year, the next Head will have the opportunity to build on this work with a community that cares deeply about both its heritage and its future.

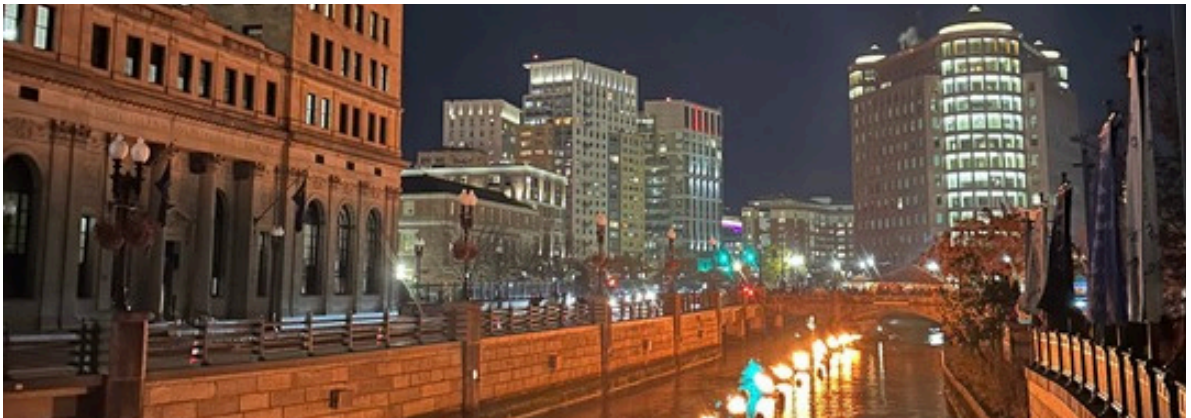
PORTSMOUTH + THE SURROUNDING REGION

Saint Philomena School is located in Portsmouth, at the northern end of Aquidneck Island, which it shares with Middletown and Newport. Portsmouth, which is known for its strong sense of community, offers the best of coastal New England—an exceptional balance of community, natural beauty, and accessibility. The area combines a coastal setting with historic neighborhoods, farmland, marinas, and open spaces. Beaches, walking trails, parks, and opportunities for sailing and other outdoor recreation contribute to the region's appeal for individuals and families. [Discover Newport, Portsmouth Parks.](#)



Nearby Newport offers a rich maritime history, distinctive architecture, museums, restaurants, and an active arts and cultural scene. Together, the island's communities provide a varied setting for life beyond school, from quiet shoreline walks to community events and waterfront activities. [Regional attractions](#)

The School also draws families from across Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. Access to Providence and Boston connects this coastal community to the educational, cultural, and professional resources of the broader New England region. For the next Head of School, the location offers the opportunity to lead within a close-knit school community while enjoying the wider possibilities of the surrounding area. [School location and community](#)





A School Rooted in Mission

“Our mission is to foster the courage and confidence of children to discover, develop and use their God-given gifts and talents to transform the world for good.”

The school's identity is shaped by the tradition of the Faithful Companions of Jesus and, since 2021, by its sponsorship from the Society of the Sacred Heart. Saint Philomena School's community is guided by five core values that are rooted in the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart Education: faith, intellect, service, community, wisdom

Mission is at the heart of Saint Philomena School. The School seeks to form students who have the courage and confidence to discover their God-given gifts, develop them fully, and use them in service of others. Saint Philomena School's mission connects personal growth with responsibility to others. Children are encouraged to discover their abilities, develop confidence in using them, and recognize the good they can contribute to their communities.

The School's Catholic, Sacred Heart identity informs its approach to teaching, relationships, and formation. Faith is expressed through school life, pastoral care, and the dignity with which all people are treated. The community values a clear Catholic mission alongside a welcoming spirit toward families of different faiths and people at different points in their faith journeys.

The heritage of the Faithful Companions of Jesus remains an important part of Saint Philomena School's character. Membership in the Network of Sacred Heart Schools brings an additional framework for formation through the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart education. The next Head will help children and adults understand these traditions and make their meaning visible in everyday decisions and relationships.

The next Head must embrace this mission authentically and understand that leading Saint Philomena School is fundamentally a ministry of education and formation.

Academic Excellence and Whole Child Formation

Saint Philomena School combines high academic expectations with a student-centered approach. Its faculty are committed to knowing students well, recognizing individual strengths and needs, and helping all children to reach their potential. Saint Philomena School believes that excellent education goes well beyond academic achievement. The School attends deliberately to students' intellectual development while also nurturing their faith, character, relationships, physical well-being, creativity, and sense of responsibility to others.

Saint Philomena School combines high academic expectations with close attention to individual students. Teachers seek to understand children's strengths, recognize their needs, and help them develop the knowledge, capability, and confidence to take on greater challenges. Families value strong academic foundations and preparation for high school within an environment that also attends to character and personal growth.

The School's understanding of education includes spiritual, social, emotional, artistic, and physical development. Student Life encompasses campus ministry, service, health and wellness, guidance, academic support, athletics, leadership opportunities, and extracurricular activities. The School also provides differentiated academic support for students.

This commitment to the whole child gives the next Head a clear foundation for evaluating programs and responding to changing student needs. Intellectual rigor, student support, and the development of learner confidence and independence belong together in the educational experience.

The School's academic leadership oversees curriculum development, professional growth, assessment, and academic support while maintaining a strong emphasis on a positive and inclusive learning environment.



THE SAINT PHILOMENA EXPERIENCE



A Community of Belonging

The School's commitment to community is among its greatest strengths. Saint Philomena School's commitment to the dignity of every individual provides a foundation for community life. Families and employees describe a place where children and adults are known, supported, and valued. The School describes itself as a community of faith, intellect, service, community and wisdom; values that shape both its educational philosophy and its expectations for how members of the community treat one another. Relationships endure beyond individual classrooms and graduation, creating a sense of connection that extends across generations of the School community.

Dedicated faculty and staff are central to this experience. They value collaboration, and the ability to bring creativity to their work. Students, in turn, value educators who respect them, take an interest in their activities, and partner to support their positive growth and development. The next Head will sustain this culture through engagement, and decisions to both preserve and amplify the culture of the community.



Governance and Resources

Saint Philomena School, the largest Catholic elementary and middle school in the Diocese of Providence, is sponsored by the Society of the Sacred Heart and is part of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools. The 25 schools of the Sacred Heart Network in the United States and Canada find unity in a shared educational mission articulated in the Goals and Criteria. Saint Philomena School, as a Catholic independent school, is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board is charged with advancing the mission of Saint Philomena School and maintaining its essential character and integrity as set forth by Rhode Island laws governing non-public education, its Catholic educational mission, and the Goals and Criteria for Sacred Heart Schools. Saint Philomena School is financially stable and well positioned. The School has an annual budget of approximately \$5.4 million.



The Board is deeply committed to Saint Philomena School's Catholic mission within the Diocese of Providence, its Sacred Heart identity, and its distinctive character as an independent school. Trustees bring deep care for students, families, educators, and the broader school community, together with a strategic perspective and a strong sense of stewardship. They are dedicated to preserving and strengthening the School's mission and distinctive character while thoughtfully advancing its continued growth, excellence and long-term sustainability.

Saint Philomena School's Board of Trustees is composed of 15 members, including representatives of the Society of the Sacred Heart and the Faithful Companions of Jesus, alumni, parents and alumni parents, and Provincial delegates for the Society of the Sacred Heart. The Head of School is an ex officio member of the board and sits on all Board committees. Board committees include the following:

- Executive Committee
- Committee on Trustees
- Finance Committee
- Institutional Advancement Committee
- Buildings and Grounds Committee
- Mission and Ministry Committee
- Health and Safety Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee



Governance and Resources

The Board's culture is highly collaborative, intentional, and deeply centered on the mission. Mutual respect provides a strong foundation for partnership, and trustees view Saint Philomena School as a school in a strong position, supported by a capable and committed team. The Board values open dialogue, thoughtful challenge, and a willingness to engage constructively, with both candor and grace. Trustees are committed to working collaboratively through challenges and opportunities, providing the Head of School with both strong support and appropriate accountability as the School continues to move forward.

The next Head will partner with a Board prepared to serve as a thoughtful and engaged strategic partner. Together, the Head and Trustees will connect the School's educational aspirations to clear priorities, responsible stewardship, and long-term sustainability. Their partnership will be grounded in candid communication, deep alignment around the mission, and a shared commitment to advancing the School's mission and distinctive strengths while thoughtfully embracing the opportunities ahead.

The Board recognizes the importance of strong leadership as Saint Philomena School enters its next chapter. With care and intentionality, the Board is committed to a thoughtful and rigorous search for a Head of School who is deeply aligned with the mission, builds on the School's strong foundation, and leads with confidence and purpose into the future.



THE FUTURE



Saint Philomena School enters this leadership transition from a position of strength. The School has a compelling mission, a strong educational program, committed faculty and families, and a beautiful campus. The next Head will lead a community with deep affection for Saint Philomena School and a shared commitment to building on its strengths and embracing the opportunities ahead. The priorities will call for thoughtful discernment, a clear and compelling vision for the future, sound educational judgment, and the courage to lead with conviction while building shared understanding and alignment around the path forward.



THE FUTURE

Preserve the Mission – Catholic Sacred Heart Identity

The next Head of School will fully embrace the mission of Catholic education, the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart Education, the School's FCJ tradition, and the core values of Saint Philomena School. The Head will be a steward of the School's distinctive culture, ensuring that its mission continues to inspire a formative educational experience for students from diverse backgrounds.

The Head will engage with students, faculty, staff, families, alumni, and the broader community, strengthening connection and a shared sense of belonging. The ability to articulate and champion the extraordinary value of the whole Saint Philomena School experience and to preserve the deeply connected community that is central to it, will be essential.

The Head will begin by immersing themselves in the community, its people, values, traditions, strengths, and aspirations. An engaged presence with students, faculty, staff, and families will be essential to understanding and sustaining the shared purpose that distinguishes Saint Philomena School. The Head will articulate how Catholic faith, Sacred Heart education, the School's history and FCJ heritage, and its independent-school character inform its purpose, priorities, and decisions.

This leadership will include deepening connections with the Sacred Heart Network and helping the community engage more fully with and live out its educational mission. The Head will honor the School's history and traditions while providing a clear vision for its future, inviting the community into meaningful growth. The ability to listen deeply, welcome differing perspectives, communicate decisions with clarity and conviction, and lead with purpose will be essential.



THE FUTURE



Student Experience and Program Excellence

The next Head will build on Saint Philomena's strong educational foundation, continuing to examine and thoughtfully evolve and strengthen the School's academic program and student experience in ways that continue to prepare children to navigate an ever-changing world with confidence, curiosity, resilience, and purpose. Working closely with faculty and staff, the Head will foster a creative, rigorous, and engaging educational program that reflects the School's Catholic and Sacred Heart mission while remaining responsive to the evolving needs of students and the broader educational landscape.



The Head will recognize that excellence in education extends beyond academic achievement. Saint Philomena School's commitment to the formation of the whole child calls for attention to students' intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical development. The Head will work collaboratively with faculty and staff to support students' academic, social, and emotional well-being, establishing consistent and developmentally appropriate practices that reflect the School's values. The Head will help the community understand how compassion, responsibility, resilience, and accountability work together to support children as they grow in confidence, character, and independence.

The next Head will bring both discernment and vision to the continued development of the educational program, honoring what is foundational and distinctive about Saint Philomena School while thoughtfully embracing opportunities to strengthen the experience that will serve its students well for years to come.

THE FUTURE

Faculty / Support Educators

Saint Philomena School has a committed, dedicated, and highly professional faculty and staff. The next Head will build on this strong foundation by inspiring and enabling educators to bring their expertise, talents, and commitment fully to the School's mission. Working closely with the leadership team and faculty, the Head will foster a culture of academic excellence, professional growth, collaboration, and shared responsibility for the formation and success of every student.

The Head will be intentional about recruiting and retaining exceptional, mission enthusiastic educators who embrace, model, and live out the School's Catholic ethos, RSCJ charism, and Goals and Criteria. The ability to steward and strengthen the distinctive culture of Saint Philomena will be essential. At the same time, the Head will encourage faculty to explore new approaches and continually refine their practice in response to the needs of today's students and the opportunities of the future in alignment with its mission.



Faculty and staff seek a leader who understands the complexity and demands of teaching, harnesses professional expertise, and provides meaningful support. The next Head will invest in the growth and development of educators, create conditions for collaboration and innovation, and maintain clear expectations for excellence and accountability. Through strong leadership and thoughtful stewardship of its faculty and staff, the Head will strengthen the people who are central to sustaining Saint Philomena School's distinctive educational experience and advancing its mission.

THE FUTURE



Leadership and Culture

The Head will lead and harness the strengths and expertise of colleagues and the School's leadership team, creating the conditions for talented people to do excellent work in service of the mission. Clear roles and reporting relationships, meaningful delegation, regular leadership-team collaboration, and appropriate accountability will enable the School to function effectively while harnessing the talent across the organization.

A pastoral, and relational leader, the Head will be an attentive listener who builds strong relationships and is willing to engage in hard conversations with candor and grace. The Head will empower the leadership team through clarity, delegation, and accountability, while harnessing faculty expertise to achieve a high standard of excellence and supporting meaningful professional growth.



THE FUTURE

Strategic and Financial Sustainability

Partnering with the Board and School leadership, the Head will build on the strategic vision established in 2023 and help shape a clear and compelling direction for the next three to five years. This work will connect the School's mission and educational priorities to enrollment, financial stewardship, faculty and staffing, technology, facilities, and program decisions, ensuring that resources and priorities remain aligned with the School's purpose and strategic goals.

The Head will play a leading role in advancing a comprehensive development and engagement program, partnering with the Board and advancement team to strengthen philanthropy, enrollment, marketing, and outreach. This work will require a clear understanding of Saint Philomena School's distinctive position, the needs and aspirations of the families it serves, and the broader educational landscape. The goal will be to ensure that the School has the necessary resources and support to fulfill its mission while continuing to welcome families deeply aligned with and enthusiastic about the School's mission.

Campus planning, including the thoughtful consideration of athletic and other student spaces, will require a long-term perspective, careful assessment of needs, and disciplined stewardship of resources.

In partnership with the Board and administration, the Head will also develop and steward a strong and sustainable economic model that supports the School's mission and long-term aspirations. This will include thoughtful attention to affordability and financial aid, competitive and sustainable faculty and staff compensation, strengthening the endowment, capital fundraising and enrollment. The Head will bring sound judgment and a long-term perspective to these decisions, balancing the resources available today with the investments needed to sustain Saint Philomena School's strength and vitality for generations to come.



THE FUTURE



External Engagement and Stewardship

The Head will ensure Saint Philomena School is positioned for continued growth while preserving and strengthening the faith, traditions and distinctive culture that define the School. The Head will ensure that the School's growth remains grounded in its mission and in its commitment to forming students who carry the values of Saint Philomena School into the world.

The Head will serve as a compelling ambassador for Saint Philomena School, articulating the distinctive value of its educational experience and cultivating meaningful relationships with current and prospective families, alumni, donors, and the broader community. The Head will partner with the Board and advancement team to strengthen philanthropy as an expression of the community's shared commitment to the School's mission, its students, and its future.

Financial aid, affordability, and the opportunity to welcome families from varied backgrounds will be important considerations in the School's long-term planning. These initiatives should be guided by a clear understanding of community needs, thoughtful stewardship of resources and a commitment to ensuring that Saint Philomena School remains a welcoming and accessible community for the families it serves.

THE LEADER SAINT PHILOMENA SCHOOL SEEKS

The next Head of School of Saint Philomena School of the Sacred Heart will be Catholic, an accomplished Catholic educator and inspiring community leader who brings energy, intellectual curiosity, and a deep commitment to the formation of children. The Head will bring the leadership experience, judgment, and vision to honor the history and purpose of Saint Philomena School while thoughtfully building on its strong foundation and embracing the opportunities ahead. Above all, the Head's leadership will be deeply grounded in and animated by the mission of Saint Philomena School of the Sacred Heart.

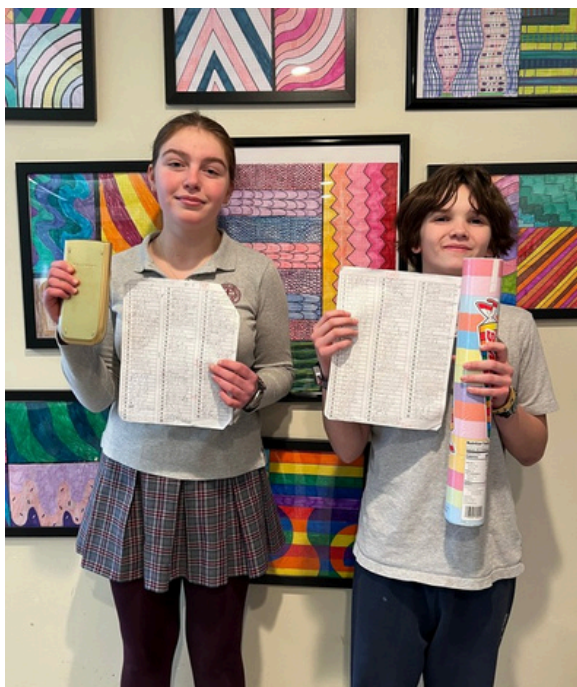


Saint Philomena School seeks a Catholic educator whose faith is authentic and whose leadership reflects a genuine love of children and a deep belief in their capacity to grow and flourish. The next Head will have a pastoral presence, together with the courage to make hard decisions, establish appropriate boundaries, and lead with clarity and conviction.

The successful leader will understand that strong relationships are built through listening, candor, consistency, and follow-through. This person will be equally comfortable in the classroom and at school gatherings, in conversation with trustees and donors, and in the thoughtful work of supporting and developing colleagues. The Head will honor the traditions and qualities that make Saint Philomena School distinctive while bringing discernment, openness, and a clear vision to its future.



THE LEADER SAINT PHILOMENA SCHOOL SEEKS



Desired qualities and experience include:

- **Catholic faith and commitment** to mission: the ability to lead a Catholic school with conviction, embrace Sacred Heart education, and honor the FCJ heritage and welcoming character of Saint Philomena.
- **Educational understanding:** significant educational leadership experience and a strong grasp of child development, elementary and middle school education, instructional quality, and contemporary student needs. Meaningful classroom experience is especially valued.
- **Relational leadership:** builds strong, purposeful relationships across the School community and leads with presence and confidence. Listens and communicates with clarity and candor, engaging thoughtfully with differing perspectives while maintaining a clear sense of direction. Brings people together around shared purpose, addresses challenges directly and is willing to make the decisions necessary to move the School forward.
- **Team development:** the ability to identify talent, support professional growth, and delegate meaningful authority with clear expectations and accountability.
- **Strategic and organizational judgment:** the capacity to set priorities, solve problems, manage resources responsibly, and translate a shared direction into effective execution.
- **Financial stewardship and external engagement:** financial acumen, the ability to partner productively with a governing Board, and the capacity to cultivate donor relationships and inspire support for the School's future.
- **Integrity, courage, and perspective:** honesty, sound judgment, compassion, and the steadiness to address challenges while sustaining a healthy school culture.

Saint Philomena School of the Sacred Heart offers the next Head of School the opportunity to lead a thriving community deeply committed to the formation of children and genuinely invested in their growth and flourishing. The next Head will help steward a school where educational purpose, and the Catholic and Sacred Heart mission are deeply intertwined, strengthening these enduring qualities for the students and families it serves today and for generations to come.

THE SEARCH PROCESS

The next Head of School will assume the position on July 1, 2027. Saint Philomena School has appointed a search committee and engaged Educational Directions, a national executive search firm, to assist with the search.

Please direct inquiries, nominations, and application materials in confidence to:

- **Dr. Mathew Heersche** — mathew.heersche@edudx.com
- **Dr. Dawn Nichols** — dawn.nichols@edudx.com
- **Mr. Jay Underwood** — jay.underwood@edudx.com



Candidates should express their interest as soon as possible and speak with the consultants before submitting application materials. Electronic submission in a single combined PDF is expected. Each candidate should provide:

- A targeted letter explaining their interest in the Head of School position at Saint Philomena School of the Sacred Heart
- A current resume
- Statement of educational philosophy
- The names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of five professional references who may be contacted by the search professionals.

All inquiries will be held in confidence.