

Leadership Transition Checklist

SAIS has developed resources for outgoing heads, incoming heads, boards, and other departments in the school community for reference during a leadership transition. This checklist is a simplified version of those resources. You may access the full list at www.sais.org/transition.

	Outgoing Head		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remain responsible for day-to-day operations until the new head's start date.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examine current senior leadership team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage expectations from board, faculty, and school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Make final administrative hires consulting with incoming head when appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Address sensitive conversations in person with new head.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify faculty members ready to assume leadership roles.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be mindful of new head's ongoing responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Address personnel concerns, including necessary staff terminations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss specifics on any overlap in leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collect and compile updates from all departments.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share recent challenges or difficult decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Address outstanding tuition payments.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create a new, non-school email.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare faculty and staff for transition in leadership.
	Incoming Head		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share preferred method of communication during transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review current or previous legal issues with school attorney.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand school's overall health. Form your own opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule campus visits needed between acceptance and start date.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule time off campus to share observations with outgoing head.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Build trusting relationship with CFO to understand how resources are being used.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create list of people to meet during the transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain status update on current strategic plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify behind-the-scenes players that get things done.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify required personal appearances (events, graduation, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain reports from any surveys deployed in the past three years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask different groups about unspoken rules and culture of the school community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review most recent accreditation report.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet with school's accreditation coordinator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Connect with accrediting agency, give notification of leadership change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review ongoing requirements of accrediting agency including standards, process, and timeline for next review or report.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine dual accreditation with state or other association, if applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review specific state guidelines and required reporting applicable to independent schools.

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	Advanced Preparation for Board and Current Head		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a succession plan before it is needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outline necessary communication to community stakeholders.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clearly define process of replacing existing head of school for both planned and unplanned instances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Include financial considerations for conducting a search.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Outline and agree upon future direction of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a dynamic list of possible internal candidates.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify skills, traits, and experience of an ideal candidate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider merits of an interim head, determine scenarios in which an interim head would be preferred.
	Board		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a joint written announcement to the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Be transparent with the new head and about the state of the school, no surprises.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep school community informed during search process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss goals for new head and develop potential timeline.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop clear plan for departure of outgoing head.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide executive coach or mentor as part of head's contract.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify school goals in progress, past and future action steps, and persons responsible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review tax implications of compensation package benefits.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create stability with board leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Include specific terms and evaluation schedule in head's contract.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do not view a transition as an opportunity to overstep board's role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Give incoming head full and complete support of board.
	Finance and Facilities		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how new head might be involved in budgeting for upcoming school year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide both periodic reports and long-term financial and facilities plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify risks and liabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss long-term financial strategies and challenges for the school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detail current operating expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outline school's investment policy and how endowment is used.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify programs, projects, or maintenance that have been put on hold.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify both short- and long-term cash flow.

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	Senior Leadership, Faculty, and Staff		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how new head will be involved in hiring of personnel for next school year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify members of senior leadership team and those on broader leadership team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detail faculty compensation models including salary scale if applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discern dynamics of leadership team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compare compensation and benefits package to peer, competitor, and local public schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify and acknowledge current concerns from each member of the team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detail history of tuition remission for faculty and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Compile a report of goals, vision, accomplishments, and challenges for each division and department.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify top issues for faculty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have directors identify one to two people to meet with first in each division or department.
	Enrollment, Marketing, and Communications		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify current enrollment goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Detail flow of financial aid by year and impact on financial sustainability.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detail yield history, yield by division, and acceptance rate history.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Describe current market demographics.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop overview of enrollment funnel history by grade.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Compile list of competitor schools both public and private.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop overview of retention rate by grade.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review current and previous marketing campaigns.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Outline financial aid policies and historical data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assess social media channels, usage, and reach.
	Advancement		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify donors to meet with immediately, and those to meet in first three months.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify under-performing or non-performing pledges that could have an impact on the school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Describe overall state of donor health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss previous fundraising strategies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop list of 20 key historic and current donors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Describe current alumni engagement and future goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Outline makeup of donor base – parents, alumni, friends, community, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify opportunities and challenges in advancement.

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	Executive Assistant to the Head		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish preferred methods of communication for email, phone, and appropriate hours to contact.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a monthly one-page reminder to highlight meetings and events, especially those unique to the school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate meetings between outgoing and incoming heads.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate with technology department to obtain new email address, laptop, mobile phone, software, and web-based program access for new head.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule on campus meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate with facilities department for access to school grounds including keys, gate and alarm codes, badge, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support efforts of board's transition committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete SAIS substantive change report.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share current policy manuals or electronic resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Update listing and contact information in other membership associations and community organizations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage new head's calendar to ensure every meeting has a clearly defined purpose with names and positions of those attending.		
	Community Relations		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create short video with incoming head to introduce themselves and share a message directly with the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify non-profit boards and other places outgoing head is active.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule meeting with representatives from Parents Association.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify major employers in local area.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Join local independent school association or heads group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify local initiatives that could impact the school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify other independent school heads to expand network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify existing partnerships with other public or independent schools and colleges.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create a list of community members for initial contact.		