



People underestimate how frequently heads of school are called upon to play King Solomon, to pull out the golden scissors and make really hard decisions

forced me to spend more time thinking about adults than I did in the first half of my time here, when I focused on the experience of the students much more. I think my successor will inherit a list of things to focus on—how you design job descriptions, how you house people, how you actually get the work done.

distinguish from students expecting to be able to do anything they want to do, and from schools catering to students' every whim.

Christopher: No kidding.

The joke about being a head of school is that all you have to do is heal the sick and raise the dead, and you're all set.

But for this question of what headship means in a progressive school, you really have to pick your time and era. Is it the progressive school of 1935, when Carmelita Hinton was founding Putney? Or do you mean the progressive school that Emily runs today in literally the next century? Does "progressive" mean being out on the edge of whatever's progressive and progressing today? Or does it mean something that once was—and we want to be that?

Emily: I think it has to be both.

Being head of a school is like being the mayor of a small town. Everything that happens is part of the same fabric: every time somebody's spouse gets sick, or somebody's kids gets kicked out of college and winds up at home. I was slow to figure some of that out. There are also systemic issues that have

What's an important piece of the job that people might not have any idea even exists?

Christopher: Supporting the board of trustees to be their very best selves and most effective team in support of the mission.

Emily: About 20% of each group—students, faculty, parents, alumni—are the more vocal and more demanding ones. Keeping in mind the views and needs of the other 80%, and balancing the school's responses, is a constant responsibility.

"Every head of school saves the school"

Emily: People want a head that can do everything, but I think the next head of school will need to be looking and saying, what's the weak link at the moment? What needs the most attention? Being able to discern that is really important. My predecessor here professionalized the business side of the school, which makes everything else possible. So I came into a school where the academic program was going to be really fun to work on, but it was only possible because Brian

Morgan had gotten a grip on what was going on in the Main Building.

Christopher: I think every head of school saves the school in their era. Each head takes on the challenges of their moment. I've informally known you, Emily, for 20 years. I think one of the things Putney needed when you started was to get pushed to think deeply about Putney's commitment to the pedagogy.

Is Putney in a position of strength?

Emily: One of Putney's strengths is that we have some of the nicest parents out there. I actually told the search committee to use that as a lure, because I spend a lot of time with other heads of school listening to their trials and tribulations, and I come back happy not to be in their shoes. I think that our educational model is cool again, which it wasn't for a long time. That's a position of strength.

If someone gave your school \$15 million, how would you spend it?

Christopher: Roughly half for long-term capital projects (faculty housing!) and half into the endowment to support the annual operating budget and financial aid.

Emily: Half for financial aid endowment, half for capital projects, including faculty housing.

What are some challenges for the new head of school?

Housing

Emily: As Christopher said, I have looked at the educational piece of Putney more than the business piece of it. And there are things that had been assumptions about how you run boarding schools that have changed. Right now, we're running hard into the idea that boarding school teachers live in a dorm for a certain length of time while they save up enough money for a down payment on a house locally. It's not realistic anymore. When you add the fact that most of our young faculty have student loans, housing becomes a huge impediment. I was slow to recognize it. The school has bought three