



June 23, 2022

Dear Members of NCAIS,

With immense appreciation for her extraordinary leadership and tenure, the NCAIS board has recently accepted Linda Nelson's decision to retire as Executive Director in July of 2023.

Linda has devoted her career to shaping education. As a graduate of Wake Forest University with a Master of Arts in Education and Counselor Education/School Counseling and Guidance services, Linda began her career in education at Salem Academy and College as Director of Career Counseling, then Head of Middle and Upper Schools at Gaston Day School before providing ongoing support and advocacy for the North Carolina Association of Independent Schools for the past 15 years.

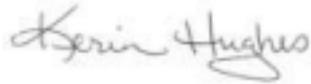
Linda has made a significant impact with her vision, deep wisdom, and adept leadership, ensuring NCAIS' progress is always connected to our mission of promoting educational excellence and empowering member schools to thrive in pursuit of their missions. All of this was accomplished while expanding membership and facilitating professional development events and conferences surrounding trends and issues facing independent schools. NCAIS' success is attributed to her devoted work. The NCAIS budget has tripled, corporate sponsorships have grown exponentially, and the Association received three Edward E. Ford grants to support our schools. Most recently she successfully led the NCAIS community through the disruptions of an unprecedented pandemic and our schools benefited because of her diligent leadership. Linda's stewardship of the NCAIS mission has positioned the Association to be a vibrant state organization which supports and inspires our North Carolina independent schools. (See full State of the Association report attached.)

While Linda's list of accomplishments is lengthy, she is best at building relationships that make us #bettertogether (NCAIS' tagline). I know you will agree that we are all better together because of her wise, caring, and thoughtful leadership. This is evident in the powerful reflection she shared in the attached letter.

Linda's forethought and skillful planning have made it a smooth process for the Board to select her successor. It will not come as a surprise to many of you that the Board unanimously chose Stephanie Keaney as the next Executive Director of NCAIS. Stephanie has diligently worked in many capacities to advance the Association and to continuously respond to the needs of our member schools with timely and innovative programming. While Linda leaves big shoes to fill, Stephanie has certainly walked alongside her and is poised to take on her new role.

This next year will afford us many opportunities to recognize and thank Linda. It has been one of my greatest privileges to work with such an inspiring leader and friend. The entire NCAIS Board joins me in thanking Linda for her humble service, congratulates her on her retirement, and looks forward to working with Stephanie in the years to come.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kerin Hughes". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Kerin Hughes  
President