

SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH....

LISA NAGEL, HEAD OF ST ANNE'S SCHOOL OF ANNAPOLIS



Tell us how you first got involved in with AIMS?

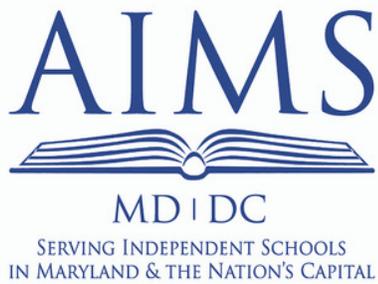
My first presentation for an AIMS conference many years ago was called Creating Caring Classrooms. Discussing with the group topics related to social-emotional literacy and conflict resolution, I was delighted that I had landed in such a caring educational community committed to leading edge teaching and learning.

What's your first memory as a head of school?

St. Anne's School marked the transition from my role as associate head to head of school with an installation service in the Episcopal tradition. Students, teachers, and parents presented me with small gifts, including a magnifying glass, symbolically entrusting me with the school's vision of an inquiry based program. I was loftily charged for the work ahead when a second grader met up with me a few days after the installation service. "So, how is your situation?" he asked. I looked at him quizzically. "You know, we had that "situation" ceremony to get you ready." Calling on this memory helps me keep my work situation-based.

What has surprised you most about working with schools and or students?

Students bring such strength and determination to their work. They see the need to adapt and innovate as an invitation, a chance to wonder, a challenge to create something new. They seem tireless in approaching quandaries with a sense of play and adventure—be it in the block corner or the science lab. I'm delightfully surprised and renewed each day that, no matter what they are facing in the world around them, they maintain a genuine enthusiasm for learning, accompanied by healthy doses of goodness and kindness for each other, too.



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What do you find most challenging about independent education?

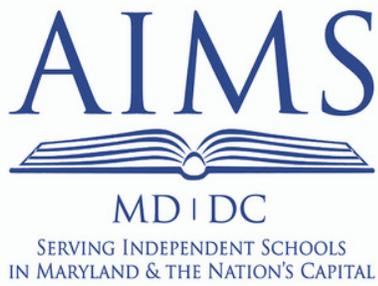
Independent schools are challenged--in a rapidly changing, digitally driven world--to cultivate out-of-the box thinking, self-governance, and a commitment to that bigger than the individual. Fostering such skills requires a lot of percolation—not an easy task in our culture of immediacy. Though difficult, our efforts to slow down, truly listen, and be present for our students, staff, and parents are important steps in modulating the pace of our schools.

What do you wish other people knew about AIMS?

AIMS expertly assesses, interprets, and communicates the landscape and trends of independent school life to its member schools, providing heads the tools required to navigate, especially during complex times. AIMS promotes connection and collaboration through opportunities to network at conferences and other round table discussions, and is future focused. No question is too large or too small for its responsive staff, and AIMS offers myriad resources for every member of a school community.

Tell us about someone who has influenced your work?

I have been fortunate for the influence of my friend and mentor, Dr. JoAnn Deak, from my time at Laurel School and throughout my career. Through her consult and authorship, JoAnn has guided educators worldwide to understand issues of brain development, gender equity, and learning. Her message of empowerment and respect for learners, and her charge for us to create environments where students have opportunities to grow as confident, competent, and connected learners, have shaped my work significantly.



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If you weren't serving as a Head of School, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?

Perhaps due to years of competitive baking that started with my college roommate at Oberlin, a college known for its Entrepreneurship program and famous alums like Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's fame, I've had the occasional dream of opening a pie shop featuring sweet treats and plain old coffee. Alas, I think the pie's famous and more immediately gratifying cousin—the cupcake—will keep my aspirations at the dream level. It's a great privilege right now, though, to be "serving" in the capacity I am--with engaged students, staff, and families. I look forward to the continued opportunity of being immersed in creative and future-focused teaching and learning environments like ours at St. Anne's School.