

# SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH....

## CHRISTINE SZALA, M.ED. HEAD OF SCHOOL, INSTITUTE OF NOTRE DAME



### **1) What is your favorite memory of being a Head of School?**

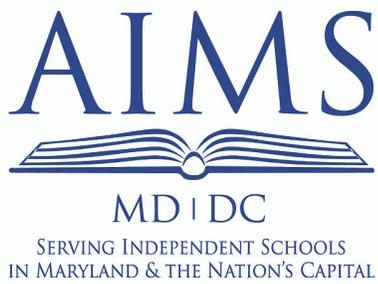
I have always aspired to be the head of an all-girls institution. When the opportunity presented itself at The Institute of Notre Dame (IND), an institution deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition and a history of women leaders, I was humbled and honored to accept. One of my first memories after I was named Head of School was when I walked through the parlor doors and realized the future of IND rested in my hands. Given the rich history of IND, I was immediately reminded of all the strong, independent women who came before me to pave the way.

### **2) What has surprised you most about working with schools and/or students?**

It has been refreshing to see and feel the mutual respect and collegiality among my colleagues. I am also continually impressed by our students – their ability to demonstrate and express who they are, what they have learned and how they value the education they receive at IND. They truly are the leaders of tomorrow.

### **3) What do you find most challenging about independent school education?**

The independent school experience provides students an environment full of opportunities and support to reach their fullest potential. Making that education financially affordable for all students is the challenge we face. It is a delicate balance.



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#### **4) What attracted you to the school at which you serve?**

The girls are what brings me to work every day. IND girls are proud of their school; they want the best not just for themselves but for all their school sisters; they are driven, passionate, confident young women. The urban environment they experience every day makes them appreciate the opportunity they have been given and increases their awareness of the broader community.

#### **5) If you could change one thing about independent schools, what would it be?**

I would change the perception that independent schools are unattainable for all - all ethnicities, all socio-economic backgrounds, all faiths.

#### **6) What experience as a Head of School has brought you the most joy?**

I find the most joy witnessing the girls in their environment - for example, we provide open forums following community days, speakers, or assemblies. It is during these open discussions that students continually surprise me with the articulation that shows me they 'get it.' These girls are learning beyond books, papers, and projects; they are full of life experiences that they are eager to share. This is truly what it is all about!

#### **7) What might AIMS Members be surprised to know about you?**

I am a huge sports fan, especially of NASCAR. A few years ago, I was given the opportunity to drive a racecar at the Kentucky Speedway. What a thrill! In addition to NASCAR, I love all Boston sports teams. I have two Labradors and their names are Boston and Fenway.