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February 13, 2026

Dear North Branch Families and Friends,

In late fall 2025, Smith told the North Branch Board that he plans to retire at the end of the 2026-2027 school year. He wisely gave us plenty of lead time for a search, and it was his hope that we would have a candidate in place before next year so that 2026-2027 could be a transition year, with his replacement shadowing him throughout that school year.

The Board is delighted to announce that Katrien has accepted our offer to become Head of School, beginning in July 2027.

Katrien is very happy to have a transition year with Smith, learning the large and small duties and processes of Head of School, and to think with Smith about ways for North Branch to move forward.

In 2026-2027, Smith will be Head of School and Katrien will be Head Teacher. With an eye towards Katrien moving into the Head of School role in July 2027, Smith will include Katrien in more decisions and, for decisions that will affect the school beyond the single year, look for coherence with her vision for North Branch. Smith's experience and Katrien's vision will work together to shape the school in the present, looking towards the future.

The Board is immensely grateful to Smith for his kindness and generosity in offering the transition year. We are delighted that Katrien has accepted our offer to become North Branch's third Head of School. And we are excited by the possibilities for the planning that Smith and Katrien together, with the support of the Board, will be able to do during the transition year.

The combination of Smith's long career as an educator and Katrien's long history at North Branch mean that we will be stepping through the transition and into the school's next phase on firm ground, in a collaborative and cooperative process based solidly on North Branch values and mission statement.

We will have later opportunities to understand the transition process and future planning as they evolve. For now, please join the Board in thanking Smith and congratulating Katrien.

The North Branch School Board of Trustees