15 QUESTIONS WITH DAVID PADILLA
GET TO KNOW OUR NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

1. **What is it about CCES that makes you most excited about becoming the next Head of School?**

While I’m excited by a host of things about CCES, I’m most thrilled about the incredible opportunity to serve at such a well-established, well-run, high-level, Episcopal school with great people.

2. **What made you decide to become an educator?**

As the child of two educators, the story of how I entered the profession is simple: I backed into it. Armed with an undergraduate degree in English, I thought I would default to law or pursuing graduate work in hopes of a position at a college or university. After just a few weeks in my first independent school, I knew that I had found my place.

3. **What is your philosophy on independent school education?**

Schools like CCES present a unique opportunity to affect the lives of students of all ages and to prepare them for meaningful and fulfilling lives beyond academic achievement, artistic expression, or athletic accomplishment. It’s a chance to prepare them to be responsible, faithful, caring, civically-minded, successful contributors to the world.

4. **When you arrive on campus, you’ll oversee the final two years of implementation for our strategic plan, “Cultivating Deep Roots & Abundant Growth.” What do you think makes an exemplary, Episcopal, co-educational, P-12, independent, college preparatory school?**

The CCES Strategic Plan was a significant factor in drawing me to this role precisely because it captures the core values of the school and presents a plan for strengthening those values even more. Faith, community, resilience, balance, character development, self-discovery, and service are all hallmarks of the best schools.

5. **Can you tell us a little bit about your time at The Baylor School? What do you think your biggest contribution has been there?**

The past eighteen years have been incredibly rich and fulfilling. My first contributions initially came in the classroom, in the dorms, and on the fields as a coach; however, as my responsibilities grew, my reach was necessarily magnified. In looking back, I think I’ve had the greatest impact in areas of curriculum and faculty development, relationship-building across constituencies, and more recently, key issues of diversity and inclusion.
6. Why was serving on the Vestry at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church important to you?

Understanding governance and serving in a large, downtown parish were central to my experience in Chattanooga. Not only was I able to expand my understanding of parish and diocesan leadership, but I was able to develop relationships and share the gifts of time and talent with the broader community.

7. During your own education, which teacher or professor had the biggest impact on you?

Honestly, a full list would be too long. My high school English teachers helped open my eyes to the beauty of great literature. My professors at Sewanee and UVA challenged me and showed me the power of high expectations. As a younger teacher, innumerable mentors shaped my understanding of the craft of teaching and how schools work. But in the end, it’s my parents—both of whom taught—who had the greatest and most lasting impact on my path in education.

8. You’ve been to Greenville three times now, what do you expect to like most about your new city? How about Karen and the girls?

In many ways, Greenville is a lot like Chattanooga, so there’s almost a familiarity about it. But after nearly two decades in the same place, we’re excited to explore all the new offerings here including the outdoors, the arts, and the community as a whole.

9. You played soccer growing up and while at Sewanee. You’ve also coached the sport at St. Albans, McCallie, and Baylor. What is your philosophy about sports participation among students?

Like anyone who has been involved in sports for a long time or at a high level, I firmly believe that one can learn as much (and sometimes more) on the fields as in the classroom. This is, in part, because the best coaches embrace the fact that they are really teachers. Athletics, like the arts and other extracurriculars, serve best as a complement to the academic pursuits.

10. Karen has been actively involved at Baylor as an alumna, parent, and as the Middle School Librarian from 2003 until 2016. What is she most looking forward to engaging in once in Greenville now that you will be empty nesters?

Adjusting to life without the day-to-day activities of our girls will definitely be different. Karen is looking forward to getting settled in and learning more about Greenville. She hopes to find ways of continuing her work in areas about which she is passionate: children, community, and literacy.
11. Arts programming has always been a big part of the core curriculum at CCES, what role do you see the arts playing in the development of the whole child?

Like sports and other extracurriculars, the arts are central to the development of the whole child. In my experience, the arts require the same focus, determination, and attention as any other discipline. To those demands, the arts also add components of personal expression, vulnerability, and shared experience.

JUST FOR FUN!

What do you, Karen, Haley, and Kate enjoy doing together as a family?

We enjoy spending time together, so almost all activities can be enjoyable. When our busy schedules allow for it, we like to hike, share great meals, and travel. We also have some traditions like binge watching series on Netflix and trying to beat each other at Jeopardy.

You’ve traveled extensively. What is your favorite destination and where do you want to visit next?

I was blessed to travel extensively as a child across most of Europe and South America, and Karen, the girls, and I have been fortunate to continue traveling both domestically and internationally as a family. There are so many wonderful places, but our family trip to Ireland several years ago stands out as a highlight; I’d love to get back there!

What books do you plan to read this summer? Why?

My list is always too long, so I often find myself juggling multiple books. I plan to read some works about school leadership (Stuart Gulley The Academic President as Moral Leader and Mark Mullin The Headmaster’s Run); some non-fiction books by authors I’ve enjoyed (Paul Tough The Years that Matter Most: How College Makes Us or Breaks Us and Jon Meacham—a Chattanoogan and fellow Sewanee grad—The Soul of America); and something for fun like Anderson’s Spoon River Anthology or Thomas Harris’s newest, Cari Mora.

Coming from Tennessee, what are your thoughts about mustard-based BBQ?

First, I was born in Kentucky, a non-BBQ state; second, my mother’s family has deep roots in Eastern North Carolina; third, my wife’s family is from— and still lives in— Alabama; fourth, I’ve spent the past twenty years in Tennessee. . . . In other words, it would be unwise for me to answer this question truthfully, so I refuse to incriminate myself (!).