



January 24, 2018

Dear Urban Community,

I am writing to let you know of my decision to retire as Head of School at the end of the next school year, June 2019 – a year and a half from now.

I was 13-years-old when I first came to Urban as a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student in 1966, the school's founding year. I remember how struck I was by my teachers' passion for what they were teaching, by the lively and engaging classes, and by the respect and trust that existed between students and teachers. I could not have imagined that 20 years later in 1986, I would become Urban's Head of School.

When I step down at the conclusion of the 2018-19 school year, I will have served as Head of School for 32 years. It has indeed been the privilege of my life to be at the helm of this unique and wonderful school and community. I am so proud of all that we have accomplished across the past three decades to transform Urban. We have developed a deeply resonant set of core values, as well as a mission statement on diversity, equity and inclusion, that provide direction and guidance for the school's growth in all areas; we have continued to expand the scope and excellence of all of our programs, notably in science, STEAM curriculum, service learning and athletics; and Urban has been a pioneer in integrating digital technology across our curriculum.

Our student population has grown from 170 when I became Head to our current enrollment of 420; we have expanded accessibility by increasing our commitment to financial aid, making Urban truly an independent high school for all of San Francisco; and we have created a far more diverse and inclusive school community. We have dramatically improved and expanded our facilities, growing our campus from a single building on Page Street to encompass the recently completed Academic and Athletic Center on Oak Street, for which I am forever grateful that it carries my name. Finally, we have made Urban a place that is nationally recognized for extraordinary teaching and for educational leadership and innovation.

What remains the same from the very start of the school is Urban's strong mission and school culture. Urban continues to recruit and retain inspiring teachers, to nurture those caring and supportive relationships between students and teachers that I experienced over 50 years ago as a student, and to make memorable and enduring student learning our most important priority. Our mission to ignite a passion for learning – and to teach students how to think, not what to think – continues to provide the best preparation for young people in a world that is changing rapidly and that is more uncertain than ever before. So too, Urban's emphasis on learning as an engaging and joyful process of discovery remains uniquely relevant in an era of increasingly high-stakes focus on a narrow set of performance outcomes.

Urban's steady growth and progress over the past 30+ years are a testament to the unstinting support and hard work that this school has engendered among trustees, parents, faculty, staff, students and alumni. I have treasured the opportunities to partner with so many dedicated and outstanding teachers, staff and administrative team members; generations of talented students and families; and incredibly

devoted and forward-looking trustees. I am gratified by all that we have been able to accomplish working together to build Urban into the extraordinary school that it is today.

I have spent the better part of my adult life as Head of Urban. I cannot imagine a more fulfilling and meaningful life journey. I want to thank the entire Urban community for giving me the opportunity to lead this school and for the opportunity to grow as an educator. Urban has given me more than I could ever hope to express in a single letter.

In the remaining 17 months of my tenure, I look forward to continuing our work to further improve and advance Urban: completing our WASC reaccreditation, designing and raising the funds for our new Performing Arts Center, implementing some of the initiatives in our new strategic plan, *Urban Thrives: 2023*, and supporting the leadership transition.

With appreciation for the entire Urban community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Salkind". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Mark Salkind  
Head of School