

NEW HEAD OF SCHOOL

Daljit 'Dal' Sohi appointed Chadwick's 12th headmaster

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Following a lengthy and comprehensive search that began last fall, the Roessler-Chadwick Foundation Board of Trustees announced on Feb. 1 its selection of Daljit "Dal" Sohi, current headmaster of Dar Al Marefa School in Dubai, to be the next Chadwick Head of School.

Sohi, a native of British Columbia, Canada, succeeds Jeff Mercer, who had been serving as Interim Head of School since the departure of Dr. Jack Creeden on Aug. 1, 2018. Creeden was Head of School for two years following the 18-year tenure of Frederick "Ted" Hill. Sohi officially begins his duties as Chadwick's 12th Head of School on July 1.

"Dal brings tremendous breadth and depth of experience as a school leader, with a career that spans 24 years, four countries and includes service on public and independent school accreditation teams in six countries and four continents," said Velveth Schmitz, Chair of the Trustees. "Dal is a proven leader with high personal integrity. His commitment to global citizenship, a student-centered and character-based education, and a hands-on learning approach, aligns perfectly with Chadwick's Mission, Core Values and our long-term strategic plan."

The six-month selection pro-

cess was led by an 11-member search committee consisting of Chadwick trustees, faculty and alumni. The committee was headed by trustee Glen Payne, who estimated that he spent about 500 hours during the search process.

The hiring timeline officially started Sept. 7, when Chadwick began accepting applications for the headmaster position. Consultants helped identify a short list of candidates to present to the search committee. After several months of interviews and discussions, the committee made its recommendation to the Board of Trustees, who then made their final decision.

"The search committee reviewed dossiers on all the qualified candidates who applied for the Head of School position, then narrowed the field to eight semifinalists, who were invited to Chadwick's campus during the first weekend of November to meet with the search committee in two separate interviews, and go on a campus tour," Payne said. "The committee then narrowed the field to four finalists, who were invited to visit Chadwick for two days and meet with a diverse range of faculty, senior administrators, students, parents, alumni and trustees to be evaluated on their skills, qualifications and



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values to be Head of School.

"All of the candidates were evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively against key attributes--experience as an educator; commitment to Chadwick's Core Values and Mission; strategic vision, high character and a collaborative, engaging personality; strong leadership and management skills; excellent communication skills, and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion--that were cu-

rated, with assistance from the Chadwick community."

As the search process wound down, Sohi excelled at each of the key attributes, which were observed firsthand by members of the search committee who interacted with him during a collective 40-50 hours over several months.

"In particular, the RCF Board identified three priority attributes that differentiated Dal from other qualified candi-

Sohi brings experience, passion to Chadwick

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dates in the search,” Payne said. “Among all four finalists, Dal was strongest in strong leadership and management skills, strategic vision and experience as an educator.”

Sohi, 56, has been a head of school since 2013. He has proven successful at implementing key strategic initiatives at his last two schools, Dar Al Marefa in Dubai and Alexander Dawson School in Las Vegas, in the areas of benchmarking, student wellness and teacher professional development. His international experience is expected to lend a diversity of knowledge and perspective that will help him lead Chadwick.

Growing up in British Columbia, Canada, Sohi was raised in a family that prioritized education. That influence helped him develop a genuine belief in teachers’ duties to develop students with the intellect and character necessary to meaningfully contribute to their local and national communities.

“My father did not have an education, but he continually stressed the importance of school for his children,” Sohi said. “He must have been convincing, as all four of his children grew up to be educators! Being an educator is the most fulfilling profession that I can imagine, and I remain as excited today as the very first day I stepped into a classroom as a teacher.”

Sohi served 17 years in the Cariboo-Chilcotin School District, a public school district in Canada, where he worked as a teacher, vice principal and principal. He then taught and was head of curriculum and the primary school at Atlanta International School in Georgia for seven years, further match-

ing Chadwick’s desire to find a headmaster with extensive classroom experience.

After Atlanta International School, Dal spent three years in China as head of the elementary school at the International School of Beijing.

“We could see that even though he had been growing with his responsibilities and taking on some administrative duties, he still really was very much a teacher and involved with the students,” Schmitz said. “With Chadwick’s Mission Statement revolving around the Core Values and experiential learning, it was important to us that we had someone who valued a student-centric learning environment.”

Sohi also demonstrated great knowledge of what global citizenship means. At Chadwick, the students experience an education designed to help them in a global-connected world.

Sohi has been described as an intelligent, diligent man with a good sense of humor. He loves being active, still plays ice hockey and golf, and also enjoys hiking with his wife Dianne, a fellow outdoor enthusiast. The couple has one son, Liam, who graduated high school from the International School of Beijing and recently graduated from Georgia Tech, and now works as an engineer in Atlanta.

“[My wife and I] love to travel and have now visited almost 50 countries,” Sohi said. “This spring, we are hoping to do a two-week hike to Mt. Everest base camp that we have been planning for a year.”

Sohi says he “loves to laugh,” especially in the midst of keeping up with an increasingly competitive world. He refuses to sacrifice the joys of daily life



COURTESY OF DAL SOHI

Sohi, a teacher at heart, values a student-centric learning environment.

in the rush to prepare students for adulthood and hopes that students can learn to laugh more at school.

“I like to set personal challenges for myself and try to meet them,” Sohi said. “Whether it is running a marathon, taking up a new sport or learning a new language, I throw myself into it. In Dubai, I set a challenge of learning to read Arabic in my first year so that I could rewire my brain to read from right to left with an unfamiliar alphabet. I learned to read Arabic in less than six months.”

Chadwick’s educational philosophy appealed to Sohi, as the goals of the school aligned with his own beliefs. He says Chadwick has stayed true to the vision Margaret Chadwick created, while understanding that students will need new skills and competencies for the future.

“When I first learned about Chadwick, it was clear that there is a real sense of community that exists here,” Sohi said. “It felt like a place my wife and I could call home for

the long term.”

Once on campus, Sohi plans to fully embrace and understand the Chadwick community and its values, with hopes of continuing the current conversations about the necessary evolution of education to meet tomorrow’s challenges.

“The students who are in kindergarten today will retire in the year 2085,” Sohi said. “What are the skills, understandings and competencies that will allow them to be successful in a world and workforce that will see many changes? It is a daunting question that we have to tackle if we are going to prepare them for their world, not ours.”

Added Sohi: “I have been excited about the prospect of leading Chadwick since the day I learned about the opportunity, and I believe that my education and training, my collaborative leadership style, and more than two decades of experience have prepared me for this role. Now, I am eager to roll up my sleeves and get to work!”