



ÉCOLE DES ROCHES  
SINCE 1899

# Introducing David Johnson,

joining École des Roches  
as Head of School  
in September 2019



## What attracted you to École des Roches?

“ Having worked for many years with the International Baccalaureate programme, as well as with students, including my own children, who completed the French baccalaureate diploma, I look forward to working in a school that has both of these outstanding educational programs. In international education, having the possibility of collaborating with colleagues from different educational systems allows us to learn from each other and be enriched by the cultural and educational backgrounds of others. In addition, École des Roches (EDR) has a unique history and heritage, which can contribute greatly to the educational experience of those students wishing to complete either the French Baccalaureate or the IB Diploma in a French context. ”

## What skills and experience do you bring with you as the new Head of École des Roches?

“ Navigating different cultural approaches and linguistic challenges is something that I do on a daily basis, both at work as well as with family and friends in a highly international context, which has helped me to develop intercultural skills that will be important for leading a school like EDR with over 50 nationalities. As an accreditation team chair, I lead multicultural groups of evaluators on a regular basis in school evaluations, and I enjoy the challenge of ensuring that the whole team is working together as a cohesive group, taking advantage of the strengths that each member brings to the team.

As the longstanding Director of a K-12 international school, I also have experience working with students across the full age spectrum, from age 4 to 18, and I look forward to working with both the primary and secondary school sections at EDR. Encouraging a rich extracurricular learning experience is also crucial in developing well-rounded students. Having accompanied students on a wide range of residential trips in Europe and Africa, I look forward to participating with the teachers and students in this essential aspect of life at EDR.

I also have many years of experience supporting students from different educational backgrounds in the university admissions process, which helps greatly when it comes to understanding what is necessary for our students to achieve entry into the higher education programmes to which they aspire, whether that be in France, North America, other European countries, or further afield. Preparing our students for their post-EDR education and careers begins with helping them make informed course choices early in their secondary education. It often also involves helping the parents understand the complexity of the admissions process. ”

## What are you most looking forward to about the role?

“ Coming from the Cote d'Azur, it clearly will not be the weather! Jokes aside, having lived in many different countries and worked in different schools, I have always found that getting to know the people who make up the school community – students, staff, parents and alumni – is crucial to then being able to lead them in the learning process. As educators, our principal role is to engage with our community of learners and look for ways to encourage and inspire all of our students in their learning process, whether that be in the classroom or on the football pitch. ”

## What has been your proudest moment in teaching?

“ As is probably the case for most educators, my proudest moments in teaching have always been when my students have that moment of success, increased awareness, sense of accomplishment, understanding of a new concept, or win in a sports tournament. As a new high school Literature teacher many years ago in Brussels, I had the privilege of coaching a fantastic volleyball team that won the International Schools Sports Tournament for all of Europe and North Africa. It was a team effort of working together from start to finish, and their success was my success. In a similar manner, helping students understand the beauty of a sonnet, climb their first 4000+ meter mountain, or gain admissions to top universities in Europe and North America has given me plenty to celebrate through the years. As a school director, a true sense of satisfaction is when I walk out of a class observation and think, “Wow, that was great learning taking place! I wish my kid were in that class with that teacher.” ”

## What are your future ambitions for the school?

“ EDR has a long history and strong heritage upon which to build and expand both its local and international reputation. The school, under the capable leadership of David Dowdles, has recently launched the IB Diploma programme. In looking to the future, I think that the next steps need to involve finding the positive synergies in the IB and French systems working together, which can enhance the advancement of the school and the enrichment of the students' learning experience. Raising the profile and awareness of the school, both nationally and internationally, will also be important, in order to capitalize on its long history. ”

## What do you enjoy doing outside of school?

“ In my free time, I enjoy reading, going to the theatre, and participating in all sorts of outdoor pursuits, including hiking, kayaking, mountain biking and skiing. My wife, Giulia, is a translator (English/German/French/Italian), and we have two children who are now in university. Our son, Luca, completed his Bac S at Lycée Parc Imperial in Nice, and he is now completing an MEng in Engineering Design at Loughborough University in the UK. Our daughter, Emma completed the joint AbiBac ES diploma at Lycée Calmette in Nice, and she is now finishing her first year of a liberal arts degree at University College Utrecht in the Netherlands. Our half term winter breaks are usually spent skiing in the Dolomites, while summers usually include an escape to the beaches and mountains of southern Corsica. ”



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