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**HAWKEN SCHOOL ANNOUNCES MERGER WITH BIRCHWOOD: PHASE I OF A 2-PHASE PLAN TO EXPAND WESTWARD**

**Gates Mills, OH** - Hawken School has announced that it is expanding westward into Cleveland in a 2-phase process, with Phase I representing a merger with Birchwood School and Phase II focusing on the development of an early childhood center in Gordon Square.

Phase I of this project, the Hawken-Birchwood merger, goes into effect immediately, and Birchwood will now be formally named Birchwood School of Hawken. The merger aims to strengthen the future of both institutions without changing the essential qualities or character of either school. In addition to having very closely aligned missions that focus on the development of character and intellect, the two schools share similar visions for the future of education and a common commitment to Cleveland.

Chuck and Helene Debelak founded Birchwood School in 1984, and they continue to run the preschool - grade 8 coeducational independent school on Cleveland's near west side. In an announcement to students and families, Mr. Debelak explained, "The school that you have known will essentially remain the same Birchwood tomorrow and into the foreseeable future, only better." Since its beginnings, Birchwood has sent numerous highly qualified graduates each year to Hawken's Upper School campus to complete their secondary education. With this merger, all Birchwood students will automatically be accepted into the Hawken Upper School without having to go through an application process.

Phase II of Hawken's move westward involves an arrangement to secure a property with the intention of opening an early childhood center to meet the needs of one of the fastest growing areas in Cleveland for families with young children: Gordon Square and its neighboring communities of Tremont and Ohio City, among others. This phase of Hawken's expansion is designed to create more opportunities for students from that area to gain early access to the Hawken community and to enter our Birchwood and Lyndhurst Lower Schools.

Surveys and inspections on the property, located at 5400 Detroit Avenue, have begun, and interviews with families will continue. Once surveys, inspections and market research conclude, planning for the building renovations will commence. Timelines and architectural renderings, which will draw inspiration from the Nido at Hawken’s Early Childhood Center in Lyndhurst, will be released upon completion.

Hawken’s Head of School Scott Looney is eager to implement the school’s mission beyond its current constituents. “We are thrilled that this two phase process to move west will give more students access to a Hawken education,” he commented. “Hawken and Birchwood have already developed a strong partnership, ensuring the success of Phase I of this project. We are eager to move forward with Phase II by making our commitment to Cleveland and its residents a reality in Gordon Square.”

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Hawken School is an independent, nonsectarian, coed day school of over 1,000 students, preschool through grade 12, located on two campuses in the eastern suburbs of Cleveland with an additional urban extension center located in University Circle. Founded in 1915, Hawken is recognized as one of the premier college preparatory schools in the nation with a diverse student body participating in a challenging program of academics, arts, and athletics that prepares them to meet the challenges of tomorrow's world.