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# Beyond Leadership: Toward Individual and Organizational Liberation

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# Leadership or Liberation

 False dichotomy? Real dichotomy?

 Conventional, hierarchical organizational models that focus on the importance or the charisma or the centrality of the Head, the CEO, the Chairman, or the Executive Director...

 produce cultures of co-dependence, treachery, muddy communication, finger pointing, and enough sibling rivalry to make us all believers in Freud

# This is where the liberation part comes in ...



The best way to lead people is to free them from the oppression of simple thinking born of categorical systems and processes, e-mail communications, and relentlessly inflexible organizational structure.





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# Because....

 ...we are social animals.

 ...we become psychologically disturbed by systems and structures that organize everything within a gnat's eyelash.

 ...we start to believe the nonsense we manufacture during our various disturbances, thereby making conventional leadership ...

# IMPOSSIBLE



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# So, how might leadership *happen* in our schools?

 ... by focusing on the mission – the reason the school exists and thrives

 ...by acknowledging and understanding the complexity of the life of the school

 ...by asking everyone in the school to lead from where they are

 ...by allowing everyone to have real accountability

What does it take to create  
an organization in which  
everyone leads from  
everywhere?

**A STRONG AND HEALTHY  
BOARD / HEAD PARTNERSHIP**



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# Trustees are...


...stewards

...strategic thinkers

...community leaders


...asset managers


...supportive employers


...volunteers with no individual authority  
who have ultimate accountability - as a  
group





# Trustees should ...

 **...insist** on strong and informed leadership from the president of the board.

 **...demand** accurate and comprehensive benchmarking information about the school – and study it annually.

 **...challenge** the head to lead with vision and conviction – and to create a community in which everyone is encouraged to lead from where they are

 **...choose** strategic initiatives that support the school's mission and prepare it to thrive in a dynamic environment.

 **...focus** on the school's mission as a context for every major decision.

# Governance Considerations:

These are the questions trustees should be asking themselves...



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Whom do we serve? Why? Is there reason to think we should consider a change?



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What is our mission? Why? Is it adequate to carry us through the next century?



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 What resources – human, physical and fiscal – can we bring to the service of our mission?

 Is the quality and effectiveness of the education available in our school verifiable and sustainable?

 Are we encouraging every member of the board to lead from where they are?


 Do the members of our board bring to the table the thinking, expertise and personal experience we need in order to act as worthy stewards?

# THE HEAD'S RESPONSIBILITY INVOLVES ...

-  **Teaching** the faculty, staff, and board
-  **Refining** the guiding vision
-  **Stimulating** strategic thinking
-  **Managing** the operations of the school
-  **Implementing** policies endorsed by the board
-  **Maintaining** organizational growth AND functional stability

# These are the components of leadership in schools

-  **Stewardship** of mission
-  **Strategic** thinking
-  **Community** visibility
-  **Asset** management
-  **Supportive** of a single employee
-  **Voluntary** service

-  **Teaching**
-  **Refining** vision
-  **Stimulating** thinking
-  **Managing** operations
-  **Implementing** policies
-  **Maintaining** stability

# What's missing?

 Power  
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 Authority  
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 Control  
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# Perception that SOMEWHERE there is POWER is a PROBLEM

 Power is scarce in schools – which is why people are in constant pursuit

 **“Why wasn’t I included?”**

## **TRANSLATION**

 “If something (ANYTHING) happened and I didn’t know it was coming, I have lost the power to control my environment.” **(everybody feels this way)**



# Major Issues Confronting Independent School Communities...

**These are the issues Heads  
should be considering with  
their Boards**










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# Relevance

-  Small classes, morally grounded school culture, and good teaching
  -  necessary but insufficient conditions for maintaining relevance
-  People want to be in charge of the schools their children attend
  -  New independent schools
  -  Charter schools
  -  New KINDS of schools yet to emerge
  -  How will independent schools respond??

Traditional independent schools no longer have a corner on the market and must be thinking now about how to maintain mission focus in the midst of increasing competition.

# Curricular and Pedagogical Soundness

 Solid program design

 Requires constant revision based on new and changing information


 Constant professional development

 Brain research; increasing knowledge about how learning happens

 Development and advance of knowledge

 Evolution of new technologies

# School Use of Time and Space

 Does everyone have to be in the same room at the same time to make powerful learning happen?

 Does everyone have to do things at the same time in order to “be in class?”

 Can we afford to start and stop school years on an annual basis?

# Metrics

 Tuition

 Facility Maintenance

 Compensation

 Philanthropy

 Regional Economics

# Faculty/Staff

 Accessibility

 Quality of experience

 Capacity to perform

 Capacity for constant learning

 Capacity for growth and development

 Competition with other industries

# Availability of Volunteer Talent

 What percentage of school's life depends on uncompensated service?

 Support for daily "life" at school

 Activities for students

 Non-tuition revenue generation

 Governance – Trustees

# The Role of the Head


... is complex

...changes constantly

...requires political savvy

...assumes academic background

...increasingly demands financial management experience

...involves pastoral care as much as it involves organizational management



Prioritize each item as #1 (high), #2, #3	PRIORITIES AND	TIME ON TASK:	HEAD OF SCHOOL	Total of all percentage allocations cannot exceed 100%
CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY	FINANCE AND OPERATIONS	COMMUNICATIONS	INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT	BOARD RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC THINKING
Curriculum (define):	Operating Budget (define):	Informal contact (define):	Development planning (define):	Board cultivation (define):
Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____
Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%
Pedagogy and student learning (define):	Facilities Management (define):	Formal communication (define):	Cultivating donors (define):	Governance partnership with board (define):
Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____
Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%
Faculty Evaluation and Professional Development (define):	Long range financial planning (define):	Written communication (define):	Capital campaigning (define):	Visionary, strategic thinking (define):
Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____	Priority: _____
Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%	Portion of time: _____%



**Because it's complex ...**



Consider a few  
fundamental  
principles...



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# Partnership Principle #1



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Organizational culture is shaped over time by many participants in the life of the school.



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Boards and Heads are just visiting...



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# Partnership Principle #2



Organizational stewardship is the shared responsibility of all those who benefit from the continued life of the school.



Boards and Heads teach the importance of history, the complexity of change, and the meaning of the mission.

# Partnership Principle #3



**The partnership between the Board and the Head is the foundational bond on which the future of the organization depends.**



The possibility that integrity, trust and candor live in a school community depends upon the Board and the Head's ability to make those values a central part of their professional connection.



# Partnership Principle #4



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Reciprocal support and respect between the Head and the Board is essential in order for either to serve authentically.



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The absence of mutual respect diminishes both the Head and the Board, and it undermines the progress of the school.



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# Partnership Principle #5



All organizations exist within a context composed of external factors over which they have no control, and in which much is in flux.



When the need for clear and creative thinking arrives, it cannot wait for the Board and the Head to “find a way to work together.”



# Governance Principle #6



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**No organization, corporation, or community can be successful without an ethic of care and regard for one another that underlies every transaction – whether intensely contentious or utterly tranquil.**



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The model of caring must be evident between the Head and Board in order to become the cultural norm.



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# Good Boards



... are “good in the same ways”

1. Board operations are clear and well known to all members
2. Members “manage” one another
3. Support for the Head is solid and visible
4. Knowledge of the organization’s mission and vision is universal
5. Honest debate yields policies that – regardless of actual agreement – are endorsed by all



# Not-quite-so-good-boards



...fail in many different ways

6. Incapacity to maintain confidentiality
7. Non-functioning committees
8. Lack of confidence in their employee
9. Confusion between governance and management
10. Poor communication among members and with community
11. Factionalism among the governing board



# Good School Heads

 ... trust their boards

 ... create effective communication dynamics with their boards

 ... earn support

 ... engage trustees in thinking about processes and issues

# Not-so-good School Heads

 ... confuse support with unconditional agreement

 ...fail to build strong and meaningful relationships with trustees

 ... assume that they deserve support as a consequence of the title


 ...regard trustees as people to be convinced of the head's plans

# Leadership in Independent Schools is Difficult Because...

 ...so many people are involved.


 ...so much is at stake.


 ...education is not a science.

 ...the organizational structure is relatively flat.






# ...and we're back to the beginning...

 We formalize life in schools in a never-ending search to “get it right.”

 We imagine that a few people are responsible for leadership because we think we can control results more effectively that way.

 We create dissonance and dysfunctionality by trying too hard to control the results

# The Point

-  Create a culture in which respect is assumed.
-  Teach people to listen.
-  Demonstrate the importance of care for one another.
-  Set high standards.
-  Let people lead – even when they're not ready.

**LIBERATE...**

**...EVERYONE FROM  
THEIR FEAR OF  
FAILURE AND THE  
MISGUIDED SEARCH  
FOR POWER...**



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**...AND THEN THE  
HEAD AND THE  
BOARD CAN  
BEGIN TO DO  
THEIR WORK.**



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