Educational Directions Incorporated
The Trusted Authority for Advancing School Leadership

THE Trustee's LETTER

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Head Support

As we write this note, winter has definitely staked out its claim on many parts of the country. New England is experiencing a 'real' old-fashioned winter. The landscape is mindful of pen-and-ink drawings—bare tree branches—and not a hint of anything green or growing.

And yet, these first few months of the new year are traditionally a time for schools when growth is very much the matter at hand—although its shoots may not be visible for months.

The current year's finances have been tallied and analyzed against the budget. Heads have delivered State of the Union addresses to their school communities. And, within many schools, the annual 'transplanting' of employees is well underway with its own repercussions on the community yet to be felt.

One critical area where trustees indeed can take action is in the 'gardening' of the head. Watering (nourishing) and staking (supporting) perhaps are more obvious. But what about pruning? It's time to help heads establish realistic boundaries for their responsibilities as they look to the year ahead.

In the myriad publications that come across our desk/screen—from international sources not limited to the educational—we have seen two recurring themes.

One is the impact of technology (email) and its ability to directly communicate with the head—no speed bumps in place such as the executive assistant or individuals rethinking before picking up the phone to talk to the CEO. In this issue, Peter Drucker's advice is timely—and heads could use some 'staking' by trustees to limit their immediate accessibility to everyone for everything.

The other—and we hear this frequently in conversation with heads—is the need, through the ups and downs of their jobs and the inherent loneliness of the position—to 'remind (themselves) why (they) do what (they) do' (See *The Head's Letter,* December 2010, Mark Fader, head of The Williams School, CT).

Trustees can help heads to prune their demands on themselves. Any gardener knows the importance of roots to the overall health of a plant. Helping heads to discern their individual roots and nourish them can only contribute to the overall health of the school.

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Just Say No…to Information Overload

The conundrum of being a leader today: more information, less time to consider it. Starting with management guru Peter Drucker in the 1960s, experts have advised that it is essential for top leaders to make time for quiet contemplation. A recent article provides guidance.

"Information overload and its close cousin attention fragmentation...hit [leaders]...particularly hard because senior executives so badly need uninterrupted time to synthesize information...and arrive at good decisions," write management consultants Derek Dean and Caroline Webb ("Recovering from Information Overload," *McKinsey Quarterly*, Jan. 2011).

With email and cellphones making it increasingly common for leaders to work nonstop, the authors urge an emphasis on three factors to reprise thinking time:

- Stop Multitasking—it makes you less productive
- Show Self-Discipline—walking away from all the devices takes guts
- Set an Example—if the leader switches from 24/7 to 9-5, everyone will

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Stop Multitasking: The first step to breaking away from multitasking is to acknowledge how much less productive a person is when trying to do too many things at once. "In a recent study, for example, participants who completed tasks in parallel took up to 30 percent longer and made twice as many errors as those who completed the same tasks in sequence." Although it may seem like multitasking enables a leader to do more in a given time, it actually is a means for avoiding the really big issues that must be addressed.

Another mistaken perception is that multitasking enhances creativity—from the stimulation of doing a variety of things. But a Harvard Business School study found otherwise: "They found that the likelihood of creative thinking is higher when people focus on one activity for a significant part of the day and collaborate with just one person. Conversely, when people have highly fragmented days—with many activities, meetings, and discussions in groups—their creative thinking decreases significantly."

Show Self-Discipline: To really walk away from the constant stream of information and communication, leaders must practice the Drucker strategy: focus, filter, forget.

Focus comes down to paying attention only to the most important issues, things that really need the leader's attention. Managing the flow of information "may be as simple—and difficult—as switching off the input" by turning off the web browser and not answering the phone. Filtering (versus totally shutting off) the information makes sense also. "A good filtering strategy... starts with giving up the fiction that leaders need to be on top of everything." Apply the concept of delegation to information, not just tasks. Forgetting refers to the practice of losing oneself in a totally different activity—yoga, running, or other things that will create downtime.

Set an Example: The norms of today's workplace all too often mean everyone is reachable 24/7. It's up to the leader to change that culture: "[T]here is a business responsibility to reset these norms, given how markedly information overload decreases the quality of learning and decision making." It will involve rethinking mindsets, having a leader who adamantly refuses to be drawn into every issue, and letting everyone know it's time to stop the information overload—for the overall health of the organization.

Measuring School Performance: Two Takes

Watch the Dashboard

To be truly effective at helping a school fulfill its mission, board members need reliable measures of performance, but all too often there is no consensus on what measures to use or how to compile and present them. A recent set of articles provides guidelines on choosing dashboard indicators suited to your organization. ("Making Metrics Matter: Use Indicators to Govern Effectively," *Trusteeship*, January/February 2011).

By evaluating more than 60 dashboard samples from higher-ed institutions, Dawn Geronimo Terkla, associate provost for institutional research and evaluation at Tufts University, noted how important it is to select the proper indicators: "They should be 1) easy to understand, 2) relevant to the user, 3) strategic, 4) quantitative, 5) up-to-date with current information, and 6) not used in isolation." Organizing the dashboards by categories was particularly effective: Common categories included financial, admissions, enrollment, faculty, and student outcomes, with the average number of indicators being about 30. Both print and electronic versions were used, from one page to 15 or more.

Likewise, in talks with board members and administrators, educational consultant Robert A. Sevier developed five guidelines for using metrics:

- "Monitor your metrics over time." Just one set of data won't be as useful as several years' worth.
- "Determine peer institutions at the institutional level." Choose several peers that make sense on a variety of factors, to get the best perspective.
- "Never use cohort and benchmark data to make your institution more like your competitors." You want to know where you stand, but you still want to stand out as unique.
- "Have confidence in the number." Being transparent about the methodology is a big factor in legitimacy.
- "Strike a balance between too many metrics and too few." Too much data obscures the important information.

Whether your board devotes an entire meeting once a year, or looks at the dashboard indicators every meeting, make sure you give enough attention to non-financial as well as financial metrics. As Clyde Allen, Chair of the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota System, says: "[T]he emerging areas of focus concern more qualitative indicators of academic excellence and public benefits, such as student-learning outcomes."

Listen to a Head

One of the issues that every good school must wrestle with is the question of student performance. How do we know that a student has achieved mastery? What evidence of success truly counts? And more importantly, what things defy easy quantification? Albert Einstein had a sign in his office at Princeton that read, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." This should guide schools and parents as they think about student achievement and the purpose of an education.

So what kinds of things count but are difficult or impossible to quantify? Here is a beginning list:

Intellectual courage	Empathy	Effort
Integrity	Resilience	Teamwork
Creative thinking	Open-mindedness	

Are these important qualities to develop in students? Without a doubt. Can they be measured in an easily understood manner? Not really. We can, of course, assemble evidence that a student is resilient or works well in teams. But we cannot give these qualities a number; they cannot be counted.

There is real pressure today, especially in the public school sector, to only teach those things that can be measured. Federally mandated standards primarily focus on the "countable" parts of a curriculum, like reading and math. And these are important skills to measure. But they do not represent everything that counts. From character traits to the value of the arts, much of what is important in an education resists quantification.

To complicate things even more, there are those qualities that only show up over time and in retrospect. Many of us can think of teachers who had an influence on our development as students and people, but sometimes we do not realize this until years pass.

All this makes me think that schools need to understand that the development of children as students and people is not like creating a widget – something that can be known and measured in a quantifiable way. Within a good education, there is much that counts that cannot be counted. And we need to be comfortable with that fact.

Chris Marblo, Head of School
The Town School, New York, NY
(Coed, Day, 400 students, N-8)

How Risky is Your Off-Campus Programming?

By Ann McCollum, Risk Management Consultant

Not only are independent school boards charged with advancing the missions of the schools they serve, providing oversight, and leading long-term strategic planning and visioning, but also assuring the management of exposure to legal liability. Managing risk is a broad construct. In practice, it most often addresses risks related to financial stability, admission and enrollment, and on-campus safety and security. Often overlooked, however, is the least complete element of a risk management "plan": off-campus programming.

What essential questions should the board ask itself with respect to its role in managing program risk?

Mission: Does the school's off-campus program—including wilderness experiences and international travel—support and further the mission of the school? If it does not, what can be done to bring the program into alignment with the mission? How can the program be better supported, not just financially, but with leadership and resources? Mission relevance leads to community and curricular buy-in, which is critical for achieving program excellence, sustainability, and ultimately reasonable management of program risks.

Assessment: Whether conducted internally or from an outside resource, assessment is a critical tool for appropriate deployment of personnel and financial resources as well as guiding curricular planning. A risk assessment for your off-campus programs can serve the same function, identifying areas of exposure to liability in your school's policies, and practices. A current assessment also reveals potential gaps in marketing materials and school communication. Do you know the applicable industry standards that may apply to off-campus programming such as experiential education or international travel? When was the last time the school engaged in a risk management assessment specifically covering your off-campus program practices and policies?

Crisis and Emergency: Board members can be invaluable resources in a school crisis. Guidance for when and how to access board resources should be written into a crisis management plan—and practiced. What role does the board or individual board member play in a crisis? Does the board know its role? Is the board familiar with the school's crisis response and emergency management plan?

The value of reviewing risk management policy and practice for both on- and off-campus programs will be apparent and beneficial to the entire school community.

McCollum's consulting company specializes in reviewing and writing risk-management policy and practice for experiential programs (annmccollum.com).

Risk Statistics

"GOOD ADVANCE PLANNING IS KEY TO RISK PREVENTION," says Judy Galliher, director of communications for education insurer United Educators (ue.org). Fortunately, UE's members reported "relatively few" claims between 2006-2010 related to experiential learning and study abroad programs. Of those claims, which were filed mainly under the "Negligence" category:

80% related to school-sponsored field trips, and included student injuries (broken bones, lacerations, and soft tissue, dental and eye injuries)

20% related to foreign study programs, and included "off-hours" student injuries, sexual assault and problems with host families

In UE's "Large Loss Report 2011,"
large settlements (in excess of $250,000) included:

NEGLIGENCE:

$4.4 million *(Student injuries suffered during an archaeological dig in Kansas)*
$375,000 *(Student burn injuries from shirt catching on fire during welding class)*

SEXUAL ABUSE:

$3 million *(Five students suffered sexual abuse while in residence at school)*

HARRASSMENT:

$1.25 million *(Student suffered from racial threats)*

Talking Tuition

Affordability is an ongoing concern for schools nowadays and according to the most recent NBOA (National Business Officers Association) issue of *Net Assets* (Winter 2011), many schools are creating new formulas for ascertaining tuition, financial assistance and thus, financial sustainability. Gone are the days (pre 2008) marked by steady increases in both enrollment and tuition.

In "The Lion Tamers: Controlling Tuition with a Close-to-CPI-Sized Whip," Donna Davis writes, "Average tuition has continued to rise at both day and boarding schools while mean household income has dropped during the past three years. At the same time, those same tuition increases have far outstripped the [Consumer Price Index] by more than 3% over the same period."

It is helpful to know what other schools are doing. Here are three specific examples from across the country.

Buckingham Browne & Nichols (Coed, day, PK-12, 1,000 students, Cambridge, MA), is 3 years into a formula that "ties future tuition increases to the CPI+ about 1 to 1.5%." Using a 10-year full-funds model, BB&N's CFO, Thom Greenlaw, explains, "[W]e...have the ability to do a lot of what-ifs, so it's a budgeting and a planning tool." Everything is related back to the CPI, although different expenses (salaries, utilities, food) are individually adjusted +/-CPI. Tied into this was a review of the student-teacher ratio questioning the assumption that lower was better. Looking for non-tuition revenue sources in order to improve faculty salaries and increase financial aid, endowment is receiving heightened attention in BBN's development efforts.

At Drew School (Coed, day, 9-12, 253 students, San Francisco, CA), *TTL* reported in its March/April 2009 issue on its model for tuition – YES – Year of Entry Set tuition. The tuition established for the year a student enters Drew is the guaranteed tuition that he/she pays during their entire tenure at school. This enables both the school to plan from a revenue-generating perspective as well as allowing families to plan. YES has allowed Drew to stabilize the demands for financial aid by locking in the tuition. Currently it sets aside 26% of its tuition revenue for financial aid.

Blue Ridge School (Boys, boarding, 195 students, St. George, VA) is one of many schools that offers parents the opportunity to avoid tuition hikes by agreeing to pay the tuition in full by August of each year.

TRENDS

Keeping an Eye on...

AS SCISSORS ARE TAKEN TO BUDGETS by governors, state legislatures and municipalities, executive directors of independent school associations are carefully monitoring the types of bills in committee and proposed legislation. Topics that will be scrutinized include: school choice (and vouchers), charges for municipal services (such as police and fire), assessments of taxes on property owned by non-profits, and reimbursements for transportation of non-public school students.

"We are very much keeping an eye on the potential impact of proposed and introduced Choice legislation in PA, NJ and DE and what any such passed measures would mean for ADVIS and our schools, especially in terms of professional development and marketing and advocacy initiatives to be considered by ADVIS."

—Barbara Kraus-Blackney,
Executive Director, Association of
Delaware Valley Independent Schools

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"A trend that worries me is negativism towards teachers. While at the moment this is primarily aimed at public school teachers' unions, there is a danger the attitude will carry over to all teachers, including independent school teachers, on the part of some parents or even board members.

—Keith Shahan,
Executive Director, Independent
Schools Association of the Central States

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"We are watching very carefully for efforts to remove property tax exemptions. At the state level we are watching for efforts to levy excise taxes on private school revenue, including tuition."

—Robert Witt,
Executive Director,
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

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"One bill that we will be watching in Florida is the Education Savings Account Bill, which is in draft form at this time. The new governor has proposed that every parent in the state be given a voucher for each child to attend the school, public or private, of his or her choice."

—Dr. Barbara Hodges,
Executive Director,
Florida Council of Independent Schools

Fundraising for Endowment: A Board's Eye View

By Tracy G. Savage, Senior Consultant, Marts & Lundy

The Great Recession reminded so many independent schools of their vulnerability in the face of the three-part perfect storm: declines in annual gift support, declines in enrollment (tuition revenue), and declines in investment income. Across the school landscape, trustees came to focus with vigor on the need for larger endowments for their beloved institutions. The clarion call of NAIS to focus on "sustainability" has been resonating more than ever.

As boards hunger to conduct campaigns to build endowment, they are faced with an early challenge: sustainability, per se, is rarely an effective argument for giving. Here are some ideas that might merit exploration and deliberation around the board table:

In every fundraising endeavor, the purpose and rationale for giving—the "case for support"—is the single most critical element of success.

- What will the endowment do? How will it transform the institution in concrete ways in the long term and short range? Endowment is a tool for good, not good in itself; the concrete educational "good" must be straightforward. Is it higher salaries? More financial aid for students? The theatre program funded in perpetuity? The cost and the calculations for monies needed must be real.
- Even—especially—in endowment fundraising, the connection between endowment purposes and school mission must be simple, direct, and unassailable.

Donors with philanthropic capacity in a school community must "buy" the concept of endowment.

- Endowment giving was higher in 2010 (compared to giving for current operations and capital projects). Some donors responded to the recession with a new understanding of the value of a "savings account." Will this attitude last? Will it take root in campaign leaders?
- At a 5% spending rate, the size and volume of gifts that will allow a growing endowment to actually make

CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

An Impressive Foursome

RYE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL, Rye, NY: The "Building on Excellence" campaign, a major campus-building program for Rye Country Day (Coed, Day, 870 students, PK-12), has already exceeded its $23 million goal, and the campaign runs until this June. A $2 million gift from current parents Alexandra and Steven Cohen sent the campaign to the nearly $26 million mark in late 2010. The Cohens' gift was the largest single donation in Rye Country Day's history, and is a key part of a much-needed expansion for the previously overcrowded Upper School.

UNIVERSITY SCHOOL, Shaker Heights, OH: A $2 million gift has been made by Richard Horvitz, '71, in honor of his father, Leonard Horvitz, '41; both father and son are still active in support of the school (Boys, Day, 876 students, K-12). The gift will establish a board room at the school's Hunting Valley (grades 9-12) campus, in a new 45,000-square-foot, three-story building that will include classrooms and science labs. Groundbreaking will be this spring.

THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL, Lawrenceville, NJ: When all was said and done, $218.5 million was raised in The Bicentennial Campaign for programs and capital projects at The Lawrenceville School (Coed, Boarding/Day, 800 students, 9-12). One of the highlights was the $60 million in unrestricted funds received from the bequest of former faculty member Henry Woods Jr., class of 1940, and his wife, Janie. In all, the campaign received gifts from 9,600 donors.

THE WESTMINSTER SCHOOLS, Atlanta, GA: The Teaching for Tomorrow campaign raised $101.5 million, exceeding its $100 million goal for the school (Coed, Day, 1,854 students, PK-12). Raising capital for an endowment fund was the main initiative when the campaign started in September 2006. Interest will fund staff salaries, a new classroom building, financial aid, an exchange program with an academy in Africa, and community service programs.

a financial impact on the school is daunting. Many donors believe their modest gifts can make a greater difference spent outright and fully.

The Board should have, and be able to articulate, a clear, authentic understanding of the role its endowment plays in the school's financial model.

- Individual trustees have varying philosophies about endowment—its purpose and its best use in the institution's financial health. Is it purely for income production, to supplement tuition revenue? Is it an asset for borrowing power? Shall it be used for special projects?
- The ethical contract between an endowment donor and the school is real. Investment policies, use of funds, conditions of spending—all merit exhaustive negotiation between school and major donor—and the resulting terms need the endorsement and adherence of the board.

Getting gifts for endowment is a worthy cause, but it often requires deeper preparation and more sophisticated fundraising practice than other development initiatives. The surest way, over time, to firm up this footing is to build a program of ongoing outreach to secure planned gifts.

Whether or not in the context of a campaign, asking loyal supporters to think of the school in their estate planning is by far the soundest long-term fundraising strategy. And like every great quest for philanthropy, it should begin with the board.

Specializing in philanthropy, Marts & Lundy advises educational and nonprofit institutions of all sizes (martsandlundy.com).

Board Chair Mentoring: Part II

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in which trustees rate their performance as well as that of the board in general. Additionally, it is worthwhile to schedule periodic open agenda meetings and retreats that inform trustees on educational trends and forecasting. This should help the board develop teamwork habits that nurture valuable strategic goals and probe the "what if" questions.

TTL: How does a board chair make the distinction between "dashboard indicators" at the policy level and "day-to-day" operational indicators at the head of school level?

NINA: A chair needs to be aware of both kinds of indicators. While the chair is not supposed to be involved with operational matters, it is critical for them to understand the ramifications of those decisions.

MARK: This is where it is important that the board chair, board, and head of school have established in advance the "dashboard indicators." This should be codified in a written document and not become a moving target for the board and the head of school. While it is almost impossible to completely create a "bright yellow line" making the distinction between board dashboard indicators and head of school operational indicators, it is well worth the time and effort to create a document that clarifies this as much as possible.

TTL: What are some of the ways board chairs need to adjust their styles of leadership depending on the stage of headship (e.g. first 2 years, first 5 years, 5-10 years, etc.)?

NINA: The qualities of the the board chair and head of school partnership need to be understood, and career path experiences reflected upon to continually broaden leadership styles. At any time, the chair needs to be a boss, a confidant, a facilitator, a shield, and at all times, must be a partner that inspires and motivates the head. Annual "360-degree" evaluations by the board and administrators of the head of school offer regular opportunities to assess the effectiveness of the head's leadership. It is valuable to spend time aligning the leadership styles of the head and board chair with the school's needs and aspirations.

MARK: Nina says it well regarding the various roles that the board chair must fulfill. Hopefully the chair understands that a head in his or her first couple of years has very different needs from a head who is mid-career or approaching retirement. This is not only in the area of compensation, but in those non-compensation areas that motivate and sustain the head in achieving the best for the school. Like any relationship, those that are successful and sustainable over time need to take into consideration those items that bring out the best in the "partner." It seems to me that viewing the head of the school through this "stages" prism makes a lot of sense as board chairs work with their head of school.

NOTA BENE

Board Chair Mentoring: Part II

In the January-February 2011 issue of *TTL*, we began a conversation about the importance of providing a mentoring network for board chairs, who are charged with leading a diverse group of individuals—with little or no explanation beforehand. Here, the conclusion of our two-part series.

TTL: **Where do board chairs get help/mentoring on a regular basis?**

NINA: Having a deep bench of fully engaged trustees offers many opportunities for mentoring and coaching. A board rich in diverse backgrounds and experiences is an important resource for a chair. It is impossible for a board chair to be an expert in all fields. For instance, if the chair does not have a background in finance, it would be important for him/her to rely on fellow trustees in this area. Successful and reflective board chairs are always looking to work with their fellow trustees for perspective, wisdom and counsel. In addition, connecting with other board chairs through the various associations and networks broadens a chair's understanding of issues facing schools today.

MARK: I would agree with Nina regarding the need for a deep bench, but it seems that there is an overall lack of board chair mentoring on a regular basis. While some associations offer board chair sessions at their conferences, which can result in informal networking, there is really very little out there on a regular, formal basis for board chairs. This is an area where state and regional associations might play a broader role.

TTL: **What do you know now that you wished you knew before becoming a board chair?**

MARK: I think that I initially did not grasp the influence that the board chair has on setting the tone for the board and, hence, the organization. Members of the board and community listen carefully to what a board chair says and pay attention to what he or she does. I am not sure that new board chairs fully grasp the fishbowl that can come with this critical path of leadership responsibility.

NINA: Potential board chairs should be aware that there is a lot of on-the-job training. Also, it is a good idea to keep in mind that the board chair is leading talented volunteers who are in turn working with a head of school who is in charge of a complex enterprise involving students, their families, faculty/staff, an academic program, and facilities.

TTL: **What do you see as the role of state and regional organizations in facilitating the growth and sophistication of boards and board chairs?**

NINA: Mark and I agree that these organizations can and should expand their services to include governance development. The New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) will be introducing an expanded accreditation section on governance that calls for in-depth reflection on the issue. NYSAIS and other similar organizations are positioned to offer trustee-to-trustee mentoring opportunities.

MARK: This is definitely an important focus area for state and regional organizations, which are well-suited to understanding not only the educational dynamics of their schools but the local and regional dynamics. State and regional associations can facilitate the growth and sophistication of boards and chairs by orchestrating face-to-face meetings, hosting local and regional conferences, using technology such as webinars and video conferencing, and circulating useful information in publications.

TTL: **How can a board further develop its expertise on an ongoing basis rather than in the midst of a crisis?**

MARK: This is really where the skills and talents of the board chair, or perhaps a board committee, come into play. While we all know that we should develop our expertise prior to a crisis, like other institutions, it is often easier to spend time on "day-to-day" board duties, and board professional development is often put on a back burner. We all know this is important, but it can be regularly neglected. I would suggest that the board annually establish a professional development program for themselves. This might include attendance at state, regional, or national conferences, bringing in speakers at board meetings, specific reading assignments, or establishing relationships with board members at other schools in the city, state, or region.

NINA: Board chairs need to keep their finger on the pulse of board dynamics. One useful tool is an annual evaluation

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Dr. Mark W. Lauria is the Executive Director for the New York State Association of Independent Schools. A former public school Assistant Superintendent and independent school Headmaster, he also has served as a board chair for a California independent school as well as the board chair for the California Association of Independent Schools.

Nina J. Köprülü currently chairs three boards of independent schools: Robert College in Istanbul, American Community School in Beirut, and the Nightingale-Bamford School in New York City. She is also president of the philanthropic Joukowsky Family Foundation.