



# LEADERSHIP

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*a collection of  
articles and thoughts  
from SAIS publications*

# ***“Strong, dynamic leaders steer the schools of the future.”***

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***“Leaders will make the future,  
but they won’t make it all at once,  
and they can’t make it alone.”***

## Building Leaders that Make the Future

by: Holly Chesser, SAIS

Published: October, 2012

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Can you “flip a dilemma” by changing an unsolvable problem into an opportunity? Can you recognize the sweet spot between judging too soon and deciding too late? Can you corral the wisdom of the crowd into a “smart-mob”? If so, you possess three of the ten critical new skills Bob Johansen outlines in his book *Leaders Make the Future*. The message of the book is straightforward. We live in a world increasingly defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). In order to positively transform that acronym into vision, understanding, clarity, and agility to the benefit of your organization, the traditional leader will need to adapt. In Sunday afternoon’s keynote address at the SAIS annual conference, a panel of independent school leaders will highlight these ten new skills and share personal stories of their implementation.

In the final chapter of Johansen’s book titled “Learning the Ten Future Leadership Skills Yourself,” he offers a focus on what the aspiring leader can do to prepare him or herself for the VUCA world of the future “even if you don’t have a progressive leadership development program to attend.” Fortunately, NAIS, SAIS, and many schools offer both external and internal leadership programs designed to help those who are ready to lead appreciate the skills they will need to refine, the challenges they will face, and the understandings they will need to develop.

# WA

Woodward Academy, the largest independent day school in the continental United States, was designated metro Atlanta’s top workplace among large companies for the past two years, earned in no small part because of the confidence employees place in the school’s new leadership.

Dr. Stuart Gulley became the seventh president of Woodward Academy in 2009, after leading LaGrange College for 13 years.

Commenting on the distinction, Gulley gratefully maintains, “Nothing carries more weight than employees’ satisfaction.”

Asked whether leadership has changed over the past twenty years, he acknowledges that the financial and organizational demands have become more complex but stresses that the ethical aspect of leadership, “a matter near and dear to (his) heart” as the author of *The Academic President as Moral Leader*, will and should always remain constant. Gulley believes the moral leader has an obligation to engage the community in and establish a tone for what character means for the organization. Only a moral leader can build and sustain a moral institution.



Stuart Gulley

Intent on building leadership internally, Gulley created a model three years ago for developing aspiring leaders called “Leadership Woodward.” The program engages participants for two years in leadership theory, the structure of Woodward leadership, and real-world application. Employing an external firm, The Leaders Lyceum, Woodward introduces individuals in a very intensive way to leadership theory and development and how that applies to them based on their personality profiles. Participants also engage in a yearlong course titled Woodward 101, which exposes them fully to the makeup of the organization: governance, recruitment, fundraising, finances, and the structure of the athletic, academic, and fine art programs. Woodward administrators teach these classes and help participants understand the leadership responsibilities of the organization as a whole. Participants are even expected to attend at least one board meeting. Lastly, members undertake a group project that will challenge their comfort zones in terms of their own leadership interests and that will introduce them to the dynamics of what it means to work in an environment as diverse as Woodward. These projects are all outgrowths of the school’s strategic plan, so the

participants' work has helped accelerate the plan's implementation. As Gulley explains, "It's a win-win for Woodward and its emerging leaders."

In the program's rollout year, 57 applicants applied, and 16 were selected by the Academy. In order to emphasize inclusivity, all academic divisions are represented in each class of participants, and meetings are rotated within divisions to further deconstruct the silo mentality.

Gulley cites three prominent benefits since the program began in 2010. Participants have greater appreciation for the breadth, depth, and complexity of Woodward and its operation. As Gulley explains, "They have a better context or empathy for decision-making that in the past they may not have understood or even, as is the tendency, have criticized." These individuals can have a major impact on building support internally and externally for the institution and there is now greater collaboration across academic divisions. Every year, the Leaders Lyceum group, based on the different personality profiles of participants, divides each class into groups of four to six to create cross-mentoring groups. The intent is to have individuals collaborate with people very different from themselves, a necessary component of effective leadership. And most importantly, the program has created an even stronger leadership base within the Academy. Some graduates aspire to new leadership roles in the school but others hope to become better leaders in their current positions: the emphasis is not exclusively on climbing the ladder.

In its third year, the program boasts roughly sixty members who have graduated or are currently in the midst of the program. Certainly, individuals may go through this experience and feel called to be a head or pursue a leadership position that Woodward cannot offer. Gulley acknowledges that potential loss, believing that preparing people for leadership is part of Woodward's gift to the college preparatory world: "We're not looking for people to leave. But if they do, they're ready."

Leading an institution entering its 112th year, Gulley appreciates the need to look forward with an eye to the past. Woodward enjoys a long history of educational excellence that he seeks to uphold. Nevertheless, he recognizes the need to empower those pockets within the organization that hunger for a more progressive direction. He believes that Woodward's leadership program will help the school pursue the future of education with a measured, intentional approach.



*Doreen Kelly*

Heading a school established 150 years ago, Doreen Kelly, Ravenscroft (NC), also understands the need to honor tradition. Kelly's path has been traditional, serving as teacher, administrator, division head, and then head of school.

Equipped with an experienced appreciation of the demands of each of these roles, Kelly serves as a faculty member of NAIS's Institute for New Heads, a mentor for NAIS's Aspiring Head's Program, and is a former teacher in SAIS's Institute for New Teachers. Last summer, as one of six faculty members teaching roughly 70 new heads of school, she enjoyed the opportunity to rediscover the roots of her profession. Faculty members plan lessons for their courses, get feedback from their students, and make adjustments as a result. Participation keeps them close to the expectations they place on their own faculty.

Each faculty member leads a "homeroom" of roughly 12 new heads, their future mentees, who will soon begin their leadership journeys. Kelly sees herself as a counselor on whom they can call as a resource during calm or crisis. This past year, she and her fellow faculty members invited a past graduate back to share the story of his first year and what he learned about himself as a leader. Although the new



head experienced a “good year,” he still advised “students” to beware of their vices, asserting that the stress of the job tends to exacerbate them.

Just as Gulley acknowledged the mutual benefits enjoyed by his programs’ participants and the school itself, Kelly stresses that mentoring new heads provides her invaluable executive coaching experience. Currently, she mentors two aspiring heads from independent schools. As a successful, tenured head of school, she understands the challenges of being a female leader, especially the balance of strength and empathy needed to command respect. Guiding her mentees through the often-challenging terrain of a head search, she believes that it is her role to “provide truth and love,” something she often finds search firms unwilling or unable to do: “This is not the time to be dainty. It’s important to be the courageous one and tell your mentee the honest truth. After all, that’s what I would want because it’s where there’s opportunity for growth.”

Nurturing potential leaders helps to ensure the future strength and longevity of independent schools. While some schools offer faculty the opportunity to grow from within, there are many high quality and high impact programs offered throughout the independent school world for leadership development. Additionally, social networking has made ongoing professional development and connections with other leaders readily available to all.

Johansen concludes his book with a conditional affirmation: “Leaders will make the future, but they won’t make it all at once, and they can’t make it alone.” Where are you on your leadership journey and who’s by your side?



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## Growing Administrative Talent

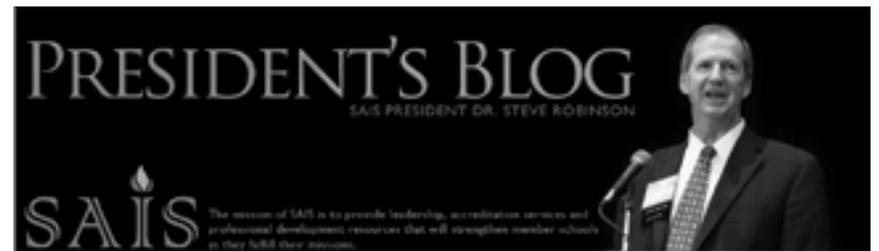
A Case for an Increase in Internal Successions to Head of School

by: Steve Robinson, SAIS

Published: September, 2012

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The ratio of external placements to internal placements in the hiring of new heads of school is drastically out of proportion. Instead of a majority of schools hiring the new head from outside of its community, it is my belief that the majority of new head hires should come from within the school. Indeed the search consultants, with whom I am acquainted, appear to have noble intentions in their service to schools and they appear to approach their task as true professionals. However, it is the belief of many independent school leaders, as it is my personal belief that the proportion of new independent school heads hired from external searches is out of balance.



When an independent school undergoes a change in head of school, there is immense pressure on the board to conduct a national search. The head search industry, as it exists today, is benefitted by national searches and short-term placements. There is an implicit, if not explicit, message conveyed that a school only maintains respect in the independent school world if a national search is undertaken. Boards are often left with the impression that their school will be slighted if they do not conduct an external search.

Boards are encouraged to believe that the perfect candidate for the position is somewhere outside of the school; a grass is always greener mentality. This is not only erroneous, it could imply that the school has not considered its full range of options for succes-

sion planning and has not appropriately engaged in developing the talent of its own administrators. For this reason, independent school boards should seek advice from a wide array of sources and listen to voices, in addition to search consultants, when determining whether or not a national search is in order for their school. Large corporations routinely have leaders within the ranks of the management team that could assume the reigns of executive leadership, if necessary, without a drastic change or disruption to the organization. Over sixty-percent of Fortune 1,000 companies CEOs were hired from within the organization and this percentage is perceived by many in the corporate world to be lower than desirable.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, having a talent-deep administrative team, from which the new head of school might come, provides confidence to the school community and will convey that the board is concerned about the continuity of mission and long-term sustainability of the school.

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### *The Internal Candidate Search Process*

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The interview and search process should be handled differently when an internal candidate is being considered. Prior to undertaking a national search, the board should first conduct a thorough review of any internal candidates and make a decision of whether or not the candidate will be offered the position. A consultant can help guide the evaluation and review of the internal candidate; however, this consultant should agree not to undertake the external search in the event that the internal candidate is not hired. This agreement will eliminate a major conflict of interest for the consultant since a contract for a national search is not possible if the internal candidate is not hired. The consultant retained for the purpose of evaluating the readiness of an internal candidate should be solely focused on that task.

It also is important not to engage in just one search process when an internal candidate competes with external candidates. When a strong internal candidate is included in the candidate pool of a national search, it poses at least three problems. First, there

is an inherent difficulty with maintaining a similar and impartial process for internal and external candidates. The internal candidate is already known by and knows the community and therefore shouldn't be vetted using the same methods appropriate for unknown external candidates.

The second problem occurs from the tendency of good external candidates to be more hesitant to apply for a position when they know that an internal candidate is in the pool. The perception by potential external candidates is frequently an assumption that an internal candidate has a distinct advantage and the search is merely an exercise of due diligence.

A third problem arises when an internal candidate is included in the same search pool as external candidates in that it creates a greater potential for the internal candidate to be embarrassed or humiliated if not offered the job. Additionally, this process often strains the relationship between the new head and the internal candidate that often leads to the internal candidate moving to another school; thus, the loss of one who is often a valuable asset to the school. Although a separate process does not guarantee that an internal candidate will remain at the school, it does provide more opportunity to "save face" if not publicly or specifically rejected in a head-to-head competition.

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### *Continuity of Leadership*

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The current state of independent school head searches in some ways undermines our goals as independent schools. The way searches are handled places too little value on continuity of leadership and cultural fit and perpetuates the message to strong administrators that they need to move out to move up. Independent schools have an opportunity to grow talent from within and should view talent development for administrators and teachers as one of the primary methods to sustain and perpetuate the mission of the school. We lose an opportunity to foster the intense school loyalty that is usually developed with long-term tenure.

Without a doubt, there are times when a new head should come from outside of the school community. When the board seeks to change directions or undertake a drastic overhaul of the school or when the school needs to recover and heal from a disruptive head or traumatic event, it is often useful for the new head to bring to the school a fresh perspective. Also, when a potential successor exists within school, there will be times when it is clear that person is not sufficiently prepared to become the next head of school. Yet when this is the case the determination can and should take place outside of and prior to a national search. Although to some this may seem like a radical idea. However, when considering the value of a highly qualified administrative team and leadership that is steeped in the culture and mores of the school, it is not radical at all. It is my hope that schools will be more intentional in the professional development of its administrative team and that more strong candidates for head of school positions will come from within. It is also my hope that in the future the first question asked by a board of trustees is which of our talented administrative team should be considered for the head position, rather than the first question being which search firm do we hire for a national search. National searches will still be an important activity within the independent school community but it is my belief that there should be considerably fewer than presently occur.

Perhaps a new model of search consultant will emerge to supplement the current industry; those who specialize in assisting schools with the assessment of internal candidates while not undertaking national searches. Consultants whose success is measured not in how many placements they have done or in how many candidates they have in their stable, but rather in how long each placement has thrived.



*For more of Steve's blogs, visit  
[sais.org/President](http://sais.org/President)*

## **Additional steps to consider**

The first step in any succession-planning endeavor is a full examination of the cultural values of the school, the congruence of mission with all aspects of school life, and tone and tenor of the school community. It is important that boards engage in a regular process to assess the opinions and input of stakeholders in reliable and meaningful ways so that the board is able to listen to many voices and not just the loud voices. This is both a best practice and a basic tenet of good governance. Understanding the culture and values of the school will allow the board to build a profile of desired characteristics, personal traits, and professional credentials for its next head of school.

The second step is for the board and the community is to understand the direction it is headed. What are the strategic visions for the school in the next 5-15 years that will help the school continue to fulfill its mission with the next generation of stakeholders? Understanding the strategic visions for the school will allow the board to build a profile of desired competencies and skill sets for its next head of school.

All too often searches focus more narrowly on finding the right person for the second step rather than someone who is the right person for the culture and the community of the school. Too often boards incorrectly assume that the second is the more important of the two.

When boards are inclusive of the entire school community, then they have successfully answered the questions and they have built a snapshot of the next head of school. This snapshot includes characteristics, personal traits, professional credentials, competencies, and skill sets. Now, as a board charged with the continuity of mission and succession planning, they are ready to search.

### References:

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## Leadership is Collaborative

An Interview with NAIS President Pat Bassett

by: Holly Chesser

Published: October, 2012

The English essayist Samuel Johnson advised, “Don’t think of retiring until the world will be sorry that you retire.” If that quote bears wisdom, Pat Bassett has chosen the perfect time to step down as president of NAIS.

Officially relinquishing the reins on June 30, 2013, Pat has led the organization since 2001, ushering in the most transformative and prominent period in its history. Capitalizing on the opportunities



Pat Bassett

presented by emerging technologies, Pat and NAIS have helped transition education toward a networked industry focused on collaboration and professional development, an accomplishment he cites as his proudest achievement in his long career.

Pat entered the profession in 1970 teaching English and coaching lacrosse at Woodberry Forrest School in Virginia. He assumed his first headship ten years later at Stuart Hall. Armed with the long view, Pat

stresses that schools must recognize that the days of the conventional leader as “omniscient and omnipotent hero” are over and that the pressures of sustainability demand an influential leader who can “coach in a team based context.” However, he worries that the financial exigencies facing independent schools have led to an emphasis on business oriented leadership. Lamenting that paradigm shift, Pat urges, “We need to reclaim that territory, especially with what’s emerging in the 21st century.” He encourages schools to recall the original meaning of the word headmaster as “lead teacher,” someone whose primary responsibility is to present an educational vision that the faculty can support and follow. And, he emphasizes, “If you as the head can’t reclaim it yourself,

it’s time to elevate someone to a position of major prominence and responsibility in your school who will take on that role of educational leadership.”

Intent on providing a vision of sustainability, he encourages schools to shift their focus from teaching to learning – what he sees as the central thrust of schools of the future. Asked how a school might become inconsequential, he stated three dangers: believing its methodology of teaching and learning is sacrosanct, overlooking new developments and research about how kids learn, and focusing too much on the delivery of content.

Proud of the tremendous amount of resources and urgency NAIS has brought to these conversations, Pat still regrets that the organization has not been more effective in promoting the need for innovation and transformative leadership: “I wish one summit I had been able to crest would be to raise the profile of professional development in our schools to the extent that they would budget more, team build, and stretch their leaders.” He acknowledges that independent schools traditionally hire very smart people but contends that they fall short in providing them guidance and direction. Citing Dan Pink’s identification of the three elements of motivation (autonomy, mastery, and purpose), Pat maintains that he “cannot think of an industry that offers more potential and more reality in those three arenas than independent schools.” Yet, he argues that schools squander this potential by not harnessing the collective power of their faculties to meet their institutional needs for improvement. He offers a leadership plan: “There are four really interesting developments in the whole area of teaching and learning: formative assessment, brain based teaching and learning, design thinking, and flipped teaching. A leader should provide autonomy and ask his faculty to choose one of the four, join a research team, develop a plan, experiment, assess the results, and report back to their col-



leagues about what they've learned." Pat emphasizes that a leader doesn't impose a vision on others but rather develops a vision with others, asserting, "powerful leadership is collaborative."

While he supports the "democracy of ideas," he also warns against trying to seek a consensus or believing that everyone can decide everything together. Instead, he offers his mantra: "Bet on the fast horses, the ones that will jump hurdles and race to the finish line." Referencing Margaret Mead's quote about the power of the few to change the world, Pat suggests harnessing six to twelve committed, passionate individuals to show the rest the success they can achieve.

After 42 years in the race, he does not expect to retire from the educational sphere any time soon. A classic "Boomer," he grew up in a generation of individuals who define themselves by their work and who live by the Horace Mann quote, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." He gratefully acknowledges that he chose to be an educator since that career affords so much opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

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*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has."*

Margaret Mead

## Innovating Leadership

Grant Lichtman's Reflections from the Road

by: Holly Chesser, SAIS

Published: October, 2012

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As the old joke goes, if Rip Van Winkle were to wake in the present, the only place that would provide some sense of the world he once knew is today's American classroom. Desks in rows, teacher-driven instruction, textbooks, bells, and homework. Sound familiar? For many it does, regardless if they are 90 or 10 years old.

The good news is that many schools are seeking a paradigm shift, actively investing resources and energy to explore innovative ways to make students' educational experiences more autonomous, purposeful, and relevant.

Grant Lichtman, on sabbatical from his position as COO of Francis Parker School in San Diego and author of *The Falconer: What We Wish We Had Learned in School*, has recently undertaken a tour of over fifty schools across the nation, seeking to "find the common threads of innovation processes that are helping to shape our schools of the future." Chronicling his journey in his blog, Grant



explains its original impetus, "I am inexorably drawn to the root cause of our dissatisfaction with the current process of education," what he views as our entrenchment in a model designed to meet the social and economic needs of the industrial revolution. He argues instead that schools must adapt to today's information age by exhibiting the character of ecosystems, defined by mutually dependent relationships that communally seek the sustainable health of the entire system. Recognizing that students' success in the future will require them to become self-evolving learners, he advocates that schools model this process by seeking to become self-evolving organizations. Although he acknowledges the historical truth in the comment by independent school head Lou Salza, "It's easier to change the

course of history than it is to change a history course in schools,” he argues that schools in the future will need to become flexibly responsible to students’ developing needs.

Employing the language of his book *The Falconer*, Grant believes that schools must first understand the “enemy” – the problem - before they begin to act. Why is it that schools are slow to innovate? He cites three main adversaries: success, inertia, and structural anchors. Plagued by the first problem, schools often wonder why they need to change since they’ve enjoyed strong histories. True, many prominent schools have built and should be proud of a tradition of excellence. But schools that define themselves through the past risk “becoming inconsequential.” Instead, they must model the primary characteristic of a good learner: a growth mindset that continually seeks improvement. Of course, the path to innovation is not always clear; many schools desire change but don’t know where to begin. Confused and uncertain, they lag behind, intent on allowing other schools to pave the way. Lastly, many schools recognize that the methodologies they’ve been employing for years may no longer be in the best interest of today’s students, but trained in the “measure twice, cut once” mentality, they’re afraid to risk failure. Focused on preparing students for college, these schools are tied to a trickle down theory of innovation, arguing that they can’t change until the university system backs away from the traditional model.

And for many of these schools the imperative to innovate does not present itself as a provoking crisis, especially because innovation does not always produce immediate tangible results, as does investment in a new auditorium or a football scoreboard. Nevertheless, failure to innovate poses danger. The U.S. mint continues to make the penny even though its production cost is now 2.41 cents. At a certain point, the cost of maintaining the status quo is not financially sustainable. As Grant explains, “Some schools are pushing forward. Their road ahead is unpredictable, messy, and will never be easy. But they will be increasingly relevant; I don’t worry about those on the path. I worry about schools that are not

pushing forward at all; irrelevancy may be closer than they think.” Schools may historically be anti-disruption, but Grant reasons that market forces will demand change. Competition ultimately breeds innovation.

And while Grant argues that acknowledging the problem is essential before strategizing a solution, he does not offer a one-dose-cures-all prescription for successful innovation. Instead, he maintains that each school is going to have to work out this problem in light of its own individual mission. Nevertheless, his blog cataloguing his educational journey visiting fifty innovative schools does present some salient themes on leadership, teamwork, commitment, and focus.

The central and dominant characteristic of innovating schools is visionary, inspirational leadership. Strong, dynamic leaders steer the schools of the future. First and foremost, these leaders advance and defend the school’s value proposition. They do not create that value or decide alone what direction the school will pursue, but they are willing to lean forward into innovation that will promote and sustain the school’s answer to “why us.”

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*“strong, dynamic leaders steer  
the schools of the future”*

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Confident and courageous, these leaders decentralize hierarchy and govern by a team-based approach, recognizing that autonomy and purpose are central to increasing motivation. Whether they harness “fast horses” or rely on the collective wisdom and creativity of their entire staff, they encourage a pioneering spirit by providing access to new ways of thinking and removing constraints to progress. They understand that in order for students to develop the skills and values of the 21st century, those traits must first be modeled. Before they teach collaboration, they learn to collaborate. Before they foster critical thinking, they must critically think. These leaders also understand that in order to be innovative, one must be willing to take risks. They recognize that the greatest en-

emy of creativity is fear of failure. To remove that restraint, they build a failure-tolerant community that recognizes the inherent ups and downs in the process of discovery and invention.

This approach clearly demands commitment. Schools determine what they believe and align their resources to promote those core values. They focus intently on learning and seek ways to make learning “student-centered,” “real-world,” “problem-based,” “engaging,” “authentic,” and “relevant.” They are in a constant state of evolution, and in fact many of the schools Grant has visited describe themselves in terms of movement: “We are a wave, not a museum.” “Innovation has to be a constantly percolating pot.” “Yes, we are designing the plane while flying.”

Lastly, they are in a continual process of analysis and improvement. This willingness to assess is critically important, as Grant stresses. They know they need to be prepared for the invariable questions from board members, “How will you measure success? How will we know you’re succeeding?” However, they also maintain that schools structured around developing the six C’s critical to success in the 21st century (Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Character, Cosmopolitanism) cannot be assessed with just a letter grade on student performance. Even assessment will need to undergo innovation to meet the newly designed system.

Through his educational journey, Grant has witnessed innovation in action. Starting in California, he traveled east across the Rockies, through the Mid-West to the New England states. Heading south over the next few weeks, he’ll begin visiting many SAIS member schools.

Grant began his quest with one motivation: “to see, learn, absorb, and understand.” But his journey offers all of us the vicarious opportunity to do the same. Schools are seeking change. Some because they felt the dissonance between the status quo where the teacher taught and the information age in which the student lives.

Some because the cost of not changing loomed as more painful than the change itself. Regardless, these schools present models of innovation. Pat Bassett has long held that the demand for financial sustainability, made all the more imperative in a struggling economy, offers opportunities as well as challenges, specifically to make “a transition from our truculent insistence on independence to a more efficient openness to interdependence as we collaborate with other schools and other sectors to market ourselves, to share resources, and to co-create 21st century school.”

Innovation may be necessary, but it does not have to happen alone. Collaboration can happen among schools as well as in schools. Grant has offered an invaluable roadmap to understand the process, reminding us that all good schools have the capacity to become great. However, he also underscores that the school’s will and leadership will ultimately determine its success. So here’s the question: does your school possess the pioneering spirit that leads to innovation?

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*On November 6th, 2012 Grant will present “Lessons from the Road” in a two hour Lunch and Learn session at the SAIS office in Atlanta. Spaces are filling up fast (both physical and virtual), so be sure to secure your seat.*

grant·lichtman  
atlanta·nov·6  
sais.org/lunchandlearn



*maybe he will explain why it costs  
2.41 cents to make a penny*

## Seasoned Leaders Weigh In

Billy Peebles, Rob Evans, and Scott Wilson comment on technology's impact on future educational leaders

by: Holly Chesser, SAIS

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In 2011, Marc Prensky in his essay “Digital Native Digital Immigrant” coined these now commonplace terms. Prensky argued that students born in the 21st century have only known a digital world, which has wired their brains differently than those possessed by the analog adults who are raising and educating them. This divide, occurring in milliseconds on an evolutionary scale, has, according to Prensky, created “the single biggest problem facing education today.” He warned, “our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.” Many schools grabbed Prensky’s baton and began running a technology race, eager to integrate technology into their classrooms as quickly as possible and intent on getting their teachers, born in the analog era, up to speed.

Over ten years later, the digital divide still exists between the natives or early adopters and the digital immigrants – typically teachers who feel displaced and disoriented by the rush to digitize the classroom despite having filing cabinets full of grateful letters from graduates. The divide is narrowing as more teachers engage in professional development to learn technology and learn how to employ it more effectively. But can that be said of school leadership? Are leaders and administrators on the forefront of this drive, or have they led from behind?

Three educational leaders waded into this discussion: Billy Peebles, Rob Evans, and Scott Wilson. Billy Peebles, Headmaster of The Lovett School in Atlanta, and Scott Wilson, President of Baylor School in Chattanooga, co-facilitate SAIS’s annual Institute for New Heads, guiding colleagues through real-life challenges toward achieving first-rate leadership. Rob Evans, a clinical psychologist



Billy Peebles



Rob Evans



Scott Wilson

and author of numerous books including *Seven Secrets of the Savvy School Leader* and *The Human Side of School Change*, conducts numerous SAIS institutes including the Institute for Experienced Heads, the Administrative Leadership Institute, and the Governance and Leadership Institute.

In his tenth year as Lovett’s headmaster, Billy leads a school at the forefront of educational innovation. Although he doesn’t describe himself as technologically savvy, he recognizes its primacy in students’ lives and its ability to help maximize student learning.

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*“technology must serve  
a larger vision”*

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He defines his role as finding the right people to lead the charge. Together, he and his team promote the vision of technology primarily as an educational tool, maintaining that its use and integration must be tied to the mission and that the goal of learning must at all times be transcendent. “Technology,” he states, “must serve a larger vision.” Championing that recognition, he encourages his team to take small steps, anticipating that modeling will encourage his faculty to be more willing to get onboard. Most importantly, he insists that his leadership team support faculty even when mistakes are made. Although he is intent on creating an environment of innovation and experimentation, he wants the faculty and the students to feel safe as they explore learning. He suspects that some would like to see the school move more quickly down this

path, but he argues that the pace is not as important as the sense of shared purpose and mission.

Having served in schools for over 30 years and now an international and national consultant to teachers, administrators, boards, and parents, Rob offers the perspective of institutional memory, often overlooked and underappreciated by those intent on reform. Although his interests have focused on change and its resistance in schools and organizations and the challenges of leading innovation, he remains circumspect about the value of digitizing education, arguing, “There is as yet no solid evidence –none—that integrating technology into instruction boosts learning outcomes.”

Citing Michael Fullan’s article “Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole School Reform,” Rob insists that educational leaders have missed the forest for the trees in their focus on technology as a means to drive instruction and school improvement. Moreover, he questions the prescience of those who purport to know what the future requires, “the evidence is very strong that most jobs in the future will NOT require the vaunted ‘21st century skills.’” Although he claims no special expertise in this area, he wonders if the larger, more important issue is the generational turnover in the headship as leaders “finish their careers and are succeeded by people young enough to be their children. Being digital natives would be a part, though a small one, of such a story.”

Scott is in a unique position to offer the perspective of student and teacher – he is now president of the very boarding school he attended. He’s proud of the iPad initiative Baylor launched this fall, placing the device into every student’s hands. However, he insists that nothing replaces a great teacher, underscoring that “what made someone a great teacher 50 years ago is what makes them great today.” Sharing his mentor’s anxiety that the technological genie is “out of the box, and it may not be a good thing,” Scott would like to see us place a greater emphasis on the whole child, believing that only certain needs of a child can be adequately addressed with technology. He worries that too many

children are now living in a virtual world, nostalgically recalling when kids played outside after school and wondering if we haven’t lost something in terms of our experiences as humans today. Scott argues that we must encourage ourselves and our students to ask discriminating questions about everything, including technology, stressing “that’s just good pedagogical practice.” And yet Scott insists that he loves this era because change is happening all around us. “Still,” he reminds us, “we can walk that path and ask questions along the way.”

Will the technology of today transform how we lead tomorrow? And – is your school preparing for it?

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*“what made someone  
a great teacher 50 years ago  
is what makes them great today”*

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SAIS Institute for New Heads  
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## FastStats: Leadership and the Educational Background of SAIS Heads of School

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In this FastStats, an overview of the educational background of 264 current SAIS heads is presented. In addition, how the educational background of SAIS heads has evolved in the past four decades and what impact that has had on leadership in SAIS schools is explored.



First, Figure 1 displays the percentage of current SAIS heads by years of administrative experience. You can deduce, for example, that about 20 years of experience is the median for SAIS heads and that 15% of SAIS heads have 10 years or less experience as an administrator and 21%

have over 30 years of experience. It would seem that there is a healthy balance of experience among the current SAIS heads.

Figure 2 shows that 80% of SAIS heads had some previous administrative experience prior to their first headship and 20% did not. Deeper analysis revealed that it was far more likely for heads to be appointed without previous administrative experience 20 or more years ago than it has been in the past 20 years. This might be due, at least in part, to the implementation of simple basic requirements like previous experience as an administrator before being a head.

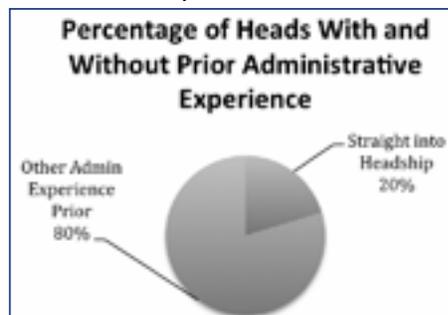


Figure 3 parses the first degree obtained into general degree categories: education, humanities, science, and business. For SAIS heads, the most common degree category is humanities, followed by education, and then science, and business. Humanities degrees include English, foreign language, history, political science, etc. Education degrees include any degree in which a teaching certification was obtained directly. The science category includes degrees in biology, physics, mathematics, etc. The business category includes degrees in business, accounting, finance, and economics.

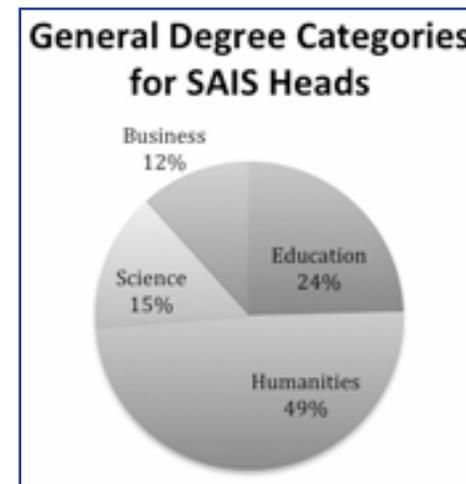
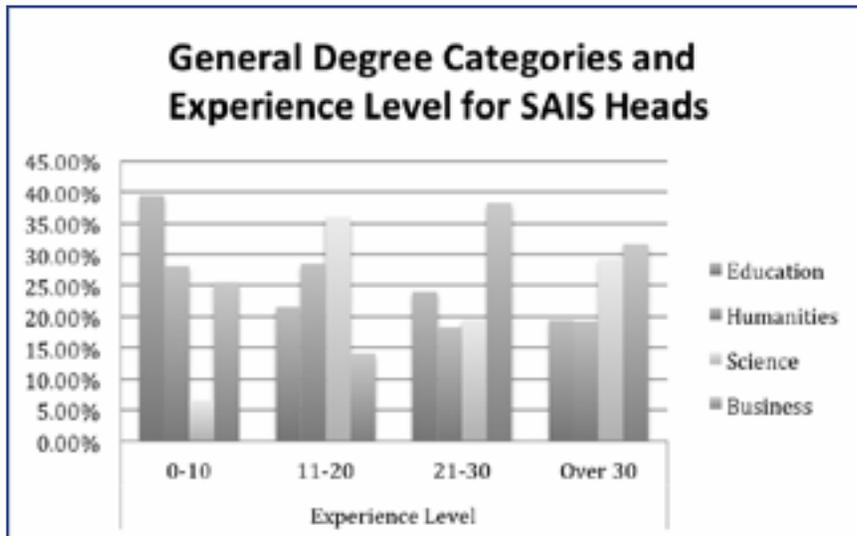


Figure 4 cross tabulates general degree categories and years of experience to assess if heads educated in different eras sought different educational experiences. Analysis of Figure 4 suggests some interesting variability. First, the percentage of new (0-10 years of experience) SAIS heads whose first degree is an education degree is substantially higher than any other category. Perhaps this is due to the more general trend that has swept through independent schools in the past couple of decades in which having a teaching certificate is much less negotiable. The leadership impact this may or may not have on the system as a whole would make for an interesting discussion when you consider the benefits of more heads with formal teacher training versus more heads with an eclectic background. As any head can attest, your job goes far beyond a command of the pedagogical.



Second, the percentage of pure science degrees for new heads is substantially lower than the other experience level categories. Again this could be a manifestation of the times. Those who have a science degree, even if they have potential to be a great administrator, are being excluded early because they may not have their teaching certification.

Third, the percentage of heads with humanities degrees has stayed relatively consistent over the past 40 years. When the data from Figure 3 and Figure 4 are looked at together, it is clear that the largest number of SAIS heads have, both now and in the past, first received a degree in the humanities. The first, and most likely, contributor to this finding is sheer numbers. There are simply a lot of people who wind up teaching who first get a BA with a humanities focus. Thus the pool of prospective administrators is large. A contributing factor might be that a good number of the humanities majors might have exceptional communication skills, i.e. high verbal intelligence, a skill set that many would agree is disproportionately important for success as a school administrator.

Fourth, a greater percentage of 20+ year heads have a business-related degree. This too may be an artifact of more stringent

recent requirements for becoming an administrator e.g., needing teaching certification. It also may reflect a shift in thinking about leadership in independent schools. Perhaps it is the case that 20 or more years ago management elements of the head's job were emphasized more. Elements such as business and financial acumen, more likely present in those with a business-related background, were emphasized more by Boards, perhaps as a reflection of the prevailing theories of management.

In summary, there seems to be a modest swing in who becomes an independent school head as reflected by educational background. In short, it seems more people with education degrees are becoming heads of school. Is this a good thing? That's tough to answer. It's good in the sense that we likely have more domain-specific experts who become heads of school and it is more likely they have taught and administered on their way to the headship. It is also more likely they do not have the breadth of experience that heads from 20 plus years ago have in areas such as business, which can be very important for a head's success. Ultimately, the needs of independent schools change. A school trying to recover from a fiscal nightmare might pursue a head with formal and extensive business training, whereas, a school, whose academic program has been in the doldrums for a span, might want a head with a stellar pedagogical track record. Either way, schools do well when they hire heads with the leadership needs of the time in mind and they do even better if they nurture the head's potential to deal with inevitable changes that schools go through over time.

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