Innovating from the Top

Essential Strategies of Technology and Innovation Leadership for Today's Heads

NAIS 2018 Annual Conference
8 March 2018

About us

- **Liz Davis**
  Assistant Head of School, Synapse School
  (Grades K-8 day school in CA)

- **DuBose Egleston**
  Head of School, Porter-Gaud School
  (Grades 1-12 Episcopal day school in SC)

- **Jim Foley**
  Assistant Head of School for Leadership and Innovation, St. Luke's School
  (Grades 5-12 day school in CT)

- **Antonio Viva**
  Head of School, Walnut Hill School for the Arts
  (Grades 9-12 boarding and day school in MA)

- **Gabriel Lucas**
  Co-Founder, Association of Technology Leaders in Independent Schools
  Principal, Educational Technology Recruiting

Our bios are on your chairs!

Spring 2017

Innovating Their Way to and from the Top

The Path of Leaders in Guiding School Innovation

S *age on the stage.... That is the pedagogical image so many of our schools have left in their rearview mirrors. Rare is the independent school that does not instead celebrate student-directed or project-based learning.

Yet it would be equally hard to find a school that does not continue to celebrate the talents of its faculty. Even alternative educational organizations — charter, online, and for-profit schools — all seek and tout engaged and motivated mentors, facilitators, or coaches, if not actual classroom teachers.
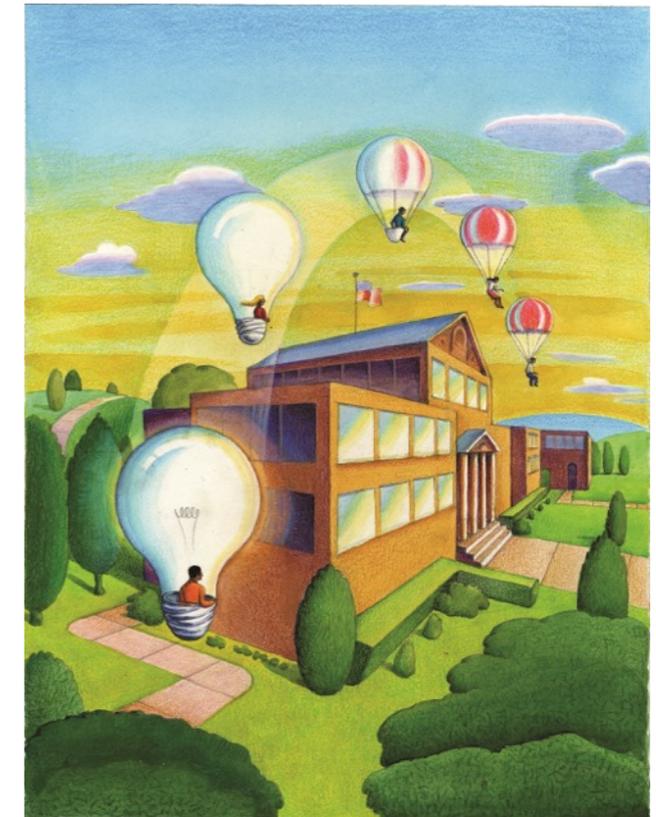
The reason for this apparent paradox is simple. As we dismantle our stages, unbolt the desks, and decentralize the learning, the value of the educator goes *up*, not down. In this new paradigm, teachers take more risks, experiment with new pedagogical techniques, and support a greater quantity and complexity of learning paths.

To enable and sustain such a culture of creativity and innovation, our schools unquestionably need key resources such as time, money, space, and talented faculty and staff. But what role does the school leader play in fostering this culture? Is a head's contribution simply to free up time, raise more money, build new spaces, and hire the right people? Like the teacher who has stepped off the stage to run an entirely different classroom, it is not unreasonable to conclude that today's heads of school require a different set of qualities and experiences to lead this innovation journey.

As a former director of technology, I can recall school leaders making predictions that caused more than momentary consternation:

- "All our teachers need the same digital whiteboard in their classrooms."
- "All our courses could just run on Facebook."
- "All our students should create an iPad app."

Behind these statements was one commonality: none of these school leaders had ever done the very mandate they were proposing. In some cases, their dexterity with technology was beyond that of a novice, but more often their technology experience was that of a consumer, not a creator — let alone an innovator. A

Three goals

- **Become a stronger leader** in the areas of educational technology and innovation

- **Recognize potential challenges** ahead of time

- **Influence your school's vision** of educational technology and innovation more confidently

Format: 4x2

- Pose question

- Panelist #1 reflects (2 minutes)

- Panelist #2 reflects (2 minutes)

- Quick neighborly discussion (2 minutes)

- Take one question from the audience (2 minutes)

Question #1

- Is programming a fundamental skill that every student should learn?

DuBose Egleston
Head of School, Porter Gaud School
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Antonio Viva
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Question #2

- What is your vision for innovation at your school?

Liz Davis

Assistant Head of School, Synapse School
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Jim Foley

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(Grades 5-12 day school in CT)

Question #3

- Do schools need directors of innovation or chief innovation officers? Should schools have centers of innovation?

Antonio Viva

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Liz Davis

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Question #4

- What's better: all faculty using the same learning platform to make life easier for students, or letting each teacher find the right learning platform for his or her class?

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Question #5

- Should schools have dedicated technology curriculum classes?

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Question #6

- Should a middle school manage student laptops, or should families manage them?

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Assistant Head of School, Synapse School

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DuBose Egleston

Head of School, Porter Gaud School

(Grades 1-12 Episcopal day school in SC)

Additional questions

- If you were starting a school, would you create a combined department from any of the following elements? {Instructional technology, Information technology, Library, Maker, Computer science, Robotics, Entrepreneurship}

- You have an amazing team of technology integrators and instructional designers in your tech and library departments, but your teachers are too busy to use them. What do you do?

- Should schools have an explicit curricular arc for technology skills?

- How might someone else with a background in innovation and/or technology rise to the top?

Last question

- What is the biggest challenge you're facing right now in the areas of technology and innovation?

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Learning to Improvise

Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 36

Trend: Tech leader, integrators, and faculty all need the skills to orchestrate the right balance of constraints and freedom

Questions?

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