The Qualities Associated with Sustaining a Long-Term Headship Survey Results

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NAIS/UPENN Study: Head of School Turnover

- **TURNOVER:** 31% of survey respondents reported their school had seen three or more heads over the past 10 years.
- **TRANSITIONS:** 30% of heads said the transition from one board chair is difficult for the board, while only 18% of Board Chairs said the transition is difficult.
NAIS/UPENN Study: Head of School Turnover

- SUPPORT & TRAINING: 55% of heads reported receiving professional support in areas other than finance in the early years while 83% of chairs believed such support was provided.
- GOAL SETTING & ASSESSMENT: 66% of heads said the board provides periodic feedback on progress toward goals, while 94% of board chairs said they were offering such feedback.
NAIS/UPENN Study: Head of School Turnover

- **UNEXPENDED TURNOVER:** About 1 in 5 of new heads of schools in 2019-2020 followed a head who held the position for 3 years or fewer.

- **SOME REASONS:** Turnover is largely due to a lack of concordance between heads and their boards, with 42% of heads and 33% of boards reporting having experienced a strained head-board relationship in the past 10 years.
NAIS/UPENN Study: Head of School Turnover

- Ineffective onboarding of new board members.
- Ineffective board chair transition plans.
- Insufficient onboarding/orientation process for new head during the first year.
- Weak collaboration on setting head of school goals with periodic review.
SURVEY PROFILE

- Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE) and the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington (AISGW) partnered to conduct this study.
- AISNE has more than 200 schools.
- AISGW has 75 schools.
- A return rate of approximately 30%.
SURVEY PROFILE

- 90% represent day schools and 80% are coeducational.
- Most boards have between 11-20 current parents.
- 77% of heads consider current parents helpful.
- 72% have 16 or more trustees on their board.
IS THERE A FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE ON YOUR BOARD?

YES 69%  NO 31%
NAIS 2020 Long-Term Headship Survey

Do you have a formal employment agreement?

**YES** 97%

**NO** 3%

For how many years is your current employment contract?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>4 or more</td>
<td>43%</td>
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Do you have terms in your formal employment agreement whereby the Board may dismiss you without cause AND must provide you severance?

**YES** 65%  
**NO** 35%

How many months of severance will you receive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>6%</th>
<th>21%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>45%</th>
<th>23%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
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<td>4-6</td>
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<td>7-9</td>
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<td>10-12</td>
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<td>More than 12</td>
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</table>
Do you and your board establish annual performance goals for the head of school?

YES 94%

NO 6%

How many goals do you typically have each year?

- 1-3: 23%
- 4-6: 67%
- 7-9: 9%
- More than 10: 1%
Do you receive a written evaluation each year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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</table>

Do you review the written evaluation with the board chair?

YES

100%
Do you have a cohort of heads of school upon which you can call for confidential advice?

**YES** 96%  **NO** 4%

How valuable is this network?

- Extremely Valuable: 52%
- Very Valuable: 33%
- Valuable: 11%
- Somewhat Valuable: 4%
- Not Valuable: 0%
AS IT SHOULD BE, BUT TURNOVER NEVERTHELESS

A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things.
~ Ecclesiastes 10:19

This seems not to be the case in schools.

- 40% of heads reported their schools are undergoing rapid change. Change can be deadly. Can inexperienced heads effectively manage that process?
AS IT SHOULD BE, BUT TURNOVER NEVERTHELESS

+ 50% of heads report being somewhat and very successful in creating growing enrollment patterns – yet turnover remains high suggesting school climate issues.

+ 69% of heads report being somewhat or very successful in creating financial stability – yet turnover remains high suggesting school climate issues.
AS IT SHOULD BE, BUT TURNOVER NEVERTHELESS

† 70% of heads strongly agree there is a “laser sharp focus” on mission.
† 86% of heads report the boards have confidence in their leadership – but the turnover continues nevertheless?
† 78% of heads strongly agree their chairs are their biggest public champions and their most trusted private critic.
AS IT SHOULD BE, BUT TURNOVER NEVERTHELESS

- 60% of heads (rated 4 or 5) as being bold and courageous.
- 78% of heads (rated 4 or 5) see themselves as vision-oriented.
Conclusions from Data

- 65% of heads had 6 years of tenure or fewer. Only 35% had greater than 7 years of tenure.
- Seasoned and experienced heads are in the minority.
- 70% of heads are at their current school fewer than 6 years.
- 39% of schools have 11 or more parents on their boards – the largest category. Parent trustees are significant.
Conclusions from Data

† 97% of heads have an employment agreement, but only 65% of heads have severance in their employment contracts, and only 23% have severance greater than 12 months. Severance is designed to discourage a board from acting impetuously.

† 69% of heads have a faculty representative on their boards – they are teaching the children of the shareholders!
Conclusions from Data

60% of heads agreed strongly with the statement that they had to eliminate threats to stabilize their schools which has lasting implications without first establishing trust or building political capital.
ADVICE FOR HEADS

- Lead with intention with a 1-3 year growth mindset.
- Seek advice and model this quality more than all others.
- Invest fully in the head/board partnership team.
ADVICE FOR HEADS

- Use the HAC – Head Advisory Committee.
- Maintain a balanced, healthy life both personally and professionally – the long-term headship is a marathon not a sprint.
- Confront weakness and mediocrity – everyone craves decisive leadership.
As it should be, but turnover nevertheless

70% of heads strongly agree there is a “laser sharp focus” on mission.
BROADLY SPEAKING

† Mission first, Structures second: Mission without commitment is a daydream, commitment without mission is a nightmare.
† Continuously communicate the school’s mission, distinctiveness and values—internally and externally—through powerful anecdotes.
† Perceived value always exceeds perceived cost—contain cost to generate value.
BROADLY SPEAKING

+ People have an intellectual connection to data and an emotional connection to stories—be sure to always use both styles. Stories come from Mission.
+ The drive engine: Mission and culture influence enrollment, fundraising, retention and innovation.
+ Develop confidence and trust, which is the capital needed to overcome challenging times.
LEADERS’ VOICES ABOUT GOING THE DISTANCE

- Powerful Persistence – Resolve to Succeed
- Bold Courage – Pursue an Unbeaten Path
- Lose Today, Win Tomorrow – Look Back, But Don’t Stare
- Live Your Core Values – Before You Lead Others, Have Confidence in Yourself
- Develop and Trust Intuition – Combine Instinct, Insight and Intelligence

“Ego is the Enemy of Good Leadership” – Letting It Determine What We See, Hear, and Believe Allows The Past To Impair Future Success (Hougaard and Carter, Leadership, November 2019)
Thank you.
ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 – WITH 5 REPRESENTING THE HIGHEST VALUE – PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:
**NAIS 2020 Long-Term Headship Survey**

- **My Board sees my primary role as that of institution builder**
  - 7% 14% 38% 38%

- **My board is overly engaged and micromanages operations**
  - 56% 27%

- **The board has confidence in my leadership and does not attempt to micromanage**
  - 7% 25% 61%

- **I have a healthy and strong relationship with the board**
  - 7% 39% 48%

- **The board chair is my biggest public champion and my most trusted private critic**
  - 15% 39% 39%

- **I have a healthy and strong relationship with my board chair**
  - 15% 75%

*Note: Numerals for values less than 7% are not displayed*
On a scale from 1 to 5 – with 5 representing the highest value – please rate your leadership style in each of the following categories:
NAIS 2020 Long-Term Headship Survey

- Thoughtful and Measured: 11% 51% 30%
- Creative and Innovative: 27% 40% 24%
- Bold and Courageous: 34% 40% 20%
- Persistent and Deliberate: 10% 54% 30%
- Core Value Driven: 34% 57%
- Collaborative and Approachable: 43% 50%

Note: Numerals for values less than 10% are not displayed.
NAIS 2020 Long-Term Headship Survey

Note: Numerals for values less than 7% are not displayed
FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS, PLEASE PROVIDE A RATING ON A SCALE 1 TO 5 (5 REPRESENTING THE HIGHEST VALUE AND 1 REPRESENTING THE LOWEST VALUE)
MY SCHOOL HAS A HISTORY OF BEING INNOVATIVE

MY SCHOOL IS UNDERGOING RAPID CHANGE TO ALIGN WITH 21ST CENTURY BEST PRACTICES

WHEN I ARRIVED AS HEAD, THERE WERE MATTERS THAT NEEDED MY IMMEDIATE ATTENTION TO ELIMINATE THREATS OR TO STABILIZE THE SCHOOL

MY SCHOOL EMBRACES DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT AND OPINION
MY SCHOOL HAS A LASER-SHARP FOCUS ON MISSION

BOARD MEMBERS ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE MISSION BY WORD AND PARTICIPATION

FACULTY AND STAFF ARE EXEMPLARS OF THE SCHOOL’S MISSION

MISSION PERMEATES THE DAILY LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

THE BOARD SUPPORTS THE HEAD AS THE CHIEF MISSION OFFICER

Note: Numerals for values less than 8% are not displayed
PLEASE INDICATE HOW SUCCESSFUL YOUR SCHOOL HAS BEEN DURING YOUR TENURE WITH RESPECT TO THE FOLLOWING:
NAIS 2020 Long-Term Headship Survey

- Enlarging the Board’s Financial Support
  - Not Successful: 25%
  - Successful: 25%
  - Somewhat Successful: 29%
  - Very Successful: 15%
  - Extremely Successful: 15%

- Increasing Alumni Financial Support
  - Not Successful: 21%
  - Successful: 28%
  - Somewhat Successful: 28%
  - Very Successful: 11%
  - Extremely Successful: 13%

- Expanding Endowment Fund
  - Not Successful: 21%
  - Successful: 14%
  - Somewhat Successful: 21%
  - Very Successful: 18%
  - Extremely Successful: 26%

- Growing Enrollment Patterns
  - Not Successful: 10%
  - Successful: 14%
  - Somewhat Successful: 26%
  - Very Successful: 26%
  - Extremely Successful: 24%

- Creating a Culture of Philanthropy
  - Not Successful: 17%
  - Successful: 33%
  - Somewhat Successful: 26%
  - Very Successful: 26%
  - Extremely Successful: 22%

- Establishing Financial Stability
  - Not Successful: 8%
  - Successful: 15%
  - Somewhat Successful: 39%
  - Very Successful: 35%

Note: Numerals for values less than 8% are not displayed.