

From the Classroom to the Courtroom

Hot Topics and Governance Trends for Trustees & Other School Leaders

A conversation facilitated by
Megan Mann
Approach

Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS)
October 10, 2025

AND NOW - CASE STUDY TIME

approach

Because—
*Plans are worthless,
but planning is
indispensable.*

Dwight D. Eisenhower (sort of)

and Winning teams practice.

approach

Public Safety & Public Opinion

Colorado independent school, Bayside Academy, annually hosts a Fall Festival – a major community and fundraising day drawing hundreds of families to campus. Everyone is having a grand ole time until the paddle-raise portion of the event, when a Bayside parent, Kelly Kapowski, accidentally drops her purse in the crowded gymnasium. Contents scatter on the gym floor, revealing a handgun and THC products. Kelly apologizes and reaches to gather her belongings, explaining that she owns a hair salon and keeps the gun on her always for protection. She also blurts out, “and it’s legal, so you obviously don’t care about my weed.” The Head of School stops the paddle raise and heads over to Kelly. Others see the gun, and some start yelling that there is a gun, causing panic and chaos. Some students photograph the gun/purse contents and share on social media with the hashtag #BaysideMomsFTW #BaysidePackinHeat&Treat. Multiple parents immediately contact head of school and the board chair that same day. Several families threaten to withdraw if Kelly’s family isn’t banned from campus. They contact trustees who are also parents to learn more and understand the safety consequences for their own children.

Fundraising

The traditional 80/20 rule where 80% of donations come from 20% of donors, is shifting toward a 90/10 divide.

Source: "Philanthropy In 2024 and Beyond: Trends, Transitions, and Transformations," Orr Group

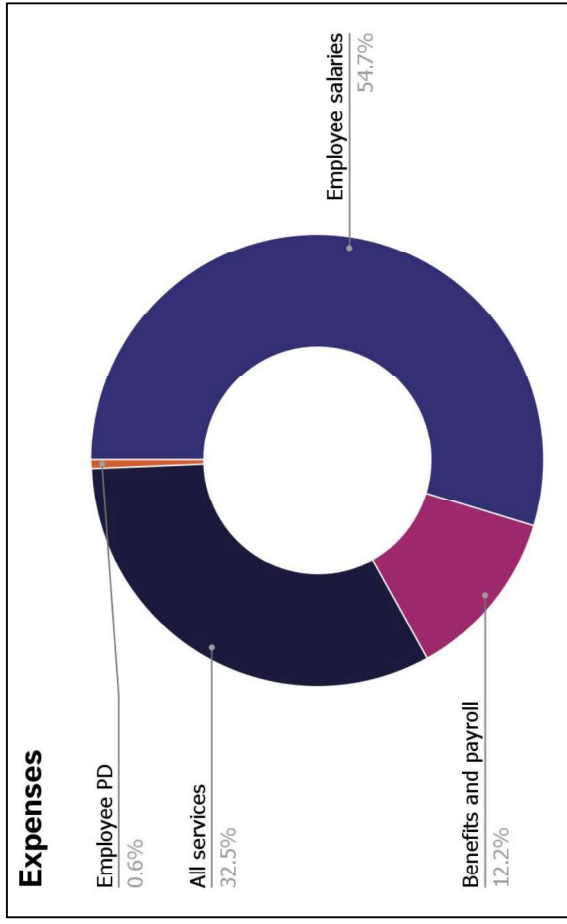
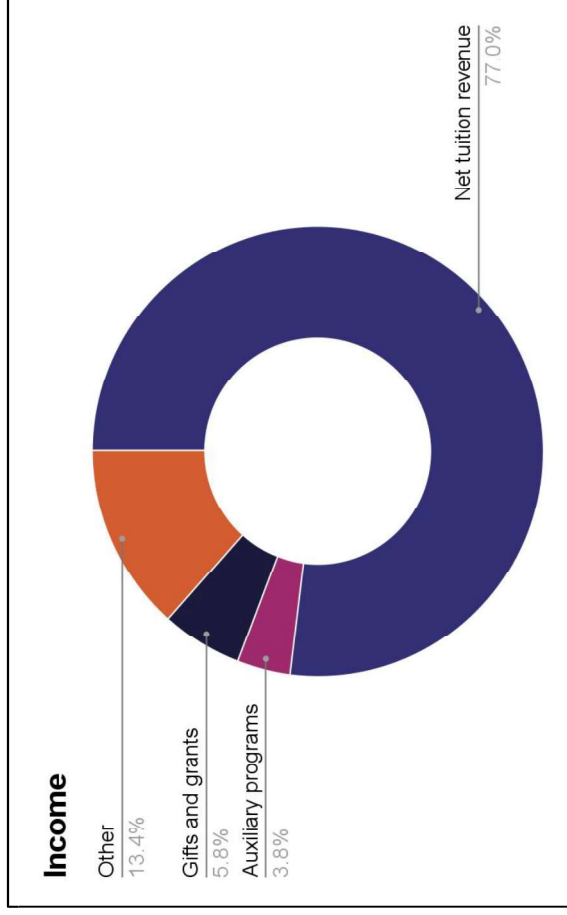
17% of funds raised come from trustees.

Source: CCS Fundraising, "CCS Philanthropy Pulse: Primary & Secondary Education Spotlight"



Day School Business Model

- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ revenue from tuition
- Almost 6% from gifts and grants
- More than $\frac{2}{3}$ of expenses go to salaries, benefits, and emp. taxes



Source: 2024-2025 NAIS Trendbook

PURSEGATE

The event, now referred to both on social media and by some upset families as “Purse-Gate,” occurs right before a previously-scheduled board meeting. The head of school provides an update to the board, and then proceeds with the agenda items. One trustee, A.C. Slater (“Slater”), adamantly demands that the agenda be adjusted to allow the board to focus more on this matter. Slater argues that it is the board’s responsibility to be nimble in the face of crisis and that attention to this event – which impacts both risk and reputation – falls squarely within the board’s fiduciary responsibility. He shares that he is on the WhatsApp thread for his son’s grade and families are considering a petition to the board and threatening to leave. He feels he owes them a response and is at a loss. They are demanding answers about Kelly’s family and the school’s plan for safety. After some initial discussion and a brief update, the board decides to proceed with the agenda, agreeing to call a special meeting to review and update on this matter next week. Slater stands firm that this is unacceptable. Given that the topic has now been raised, Lisa Turtle, another trustee, shares at the meeting that she was contacted by a good friend, Screech, who works for a local media outlet. When asked for a comment from Bayside, Lisa replied, “no comment, Screech.

Conflict in schools

Trust and the Crisis of Grievance

The 25th anniversary edition of the Edelman Trust Barometer has revealed a profound shift to acceptance of aggressive action, with political polarization and deepening fears giving rise to a widespread sense of grievance.

Declining trust
+
Hostile activism
=
More conflict in schools



Sources: Edelman Trust Institute, 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report: *Trust and the Crisis of Grievance*. AASA: The School Superintendents Association, “New Report Details Cost of Conflict for Districts.”

BONUS TREND: THE FUTURE

approach

What Do Families Want from Education?

1. Practical skills
2. Critical thinking
3. Character and ethics
4. Basic reading, writing, and arithmetic

Noteworthy changes:

- Individualized education is the future. One-size-fits-all is the past.
- College is not seen as the outcome for a majority of respondents.

Source: Purpose of Education Index, Populace Insights, 2022

approach

What Will It Take to Succeed in the Future?

- By 2030, 70% of the skills considered essential for most jobs will change from what they are now.
- Professionals entering the workforce today are on pace to hold twice as many jobs over their careers compared to 15 years ago.
- The skills required for many jobs are shifting, even for those staying in the same role.

Source: “LinkedIn Skills on the Rise 2025: The 15 Fastest-Growing Skills in the US,” LinkedIn News, March 19, 2025.

Most important:



(And thank you for having me.)

Megan Mann
megan@theapproachgroup.com