



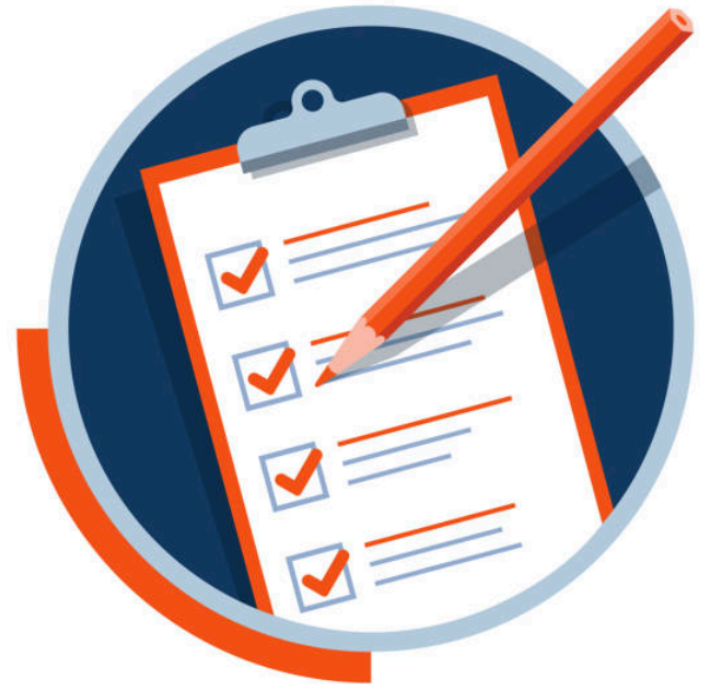
ASSOCIATION *of* COLORADO  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

# 2023 ACIS New Trustee Workshop

With  
Monique Davis + Anne Marie Balzano

# Today's Agenda

- Why do Independent Schools Need A Board of Trustees
- Best practices
- Roles and Responsibilities
- What Makes an Effective Board?
- Supporting a Strong Head-Board Partnership
- Cultivating Board Culture
- Partnership
- Case Studies
- What will be your contribution?



# Introductions



# Roles, Responsibilities, and Best Practices



# Why A Board of Trustees?





# Top Characteristics of High Performing Boards

- Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Strong strategic orientation—focusing on what's most important in alignment to school mission
- A culture of self-assessment, accountability, and open and honest communication
- Healthy attention to board member recruitment, onboarding, and development
- Structuring for efficiency, development, and innovation (consent agenda/task forces)

Source: BoardSource



# Committees: Where the work happens



- Committees and task forces form the structure for boards
- Each should have a clear charter outlining its purpose
- Committee work should align with the mission, strategic vision, goals, and priorities
- Typical school board committees include executive, finance, governance, and development; smaller boards often do not have an executive committee

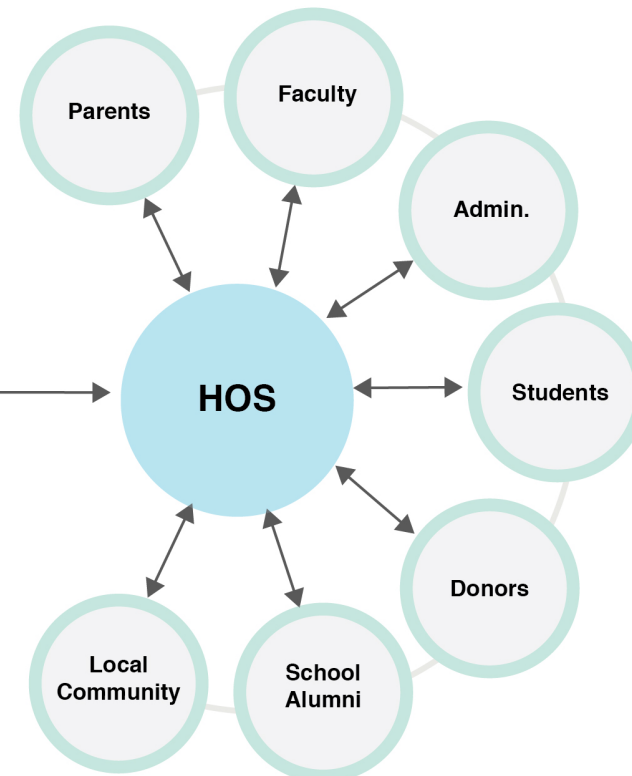
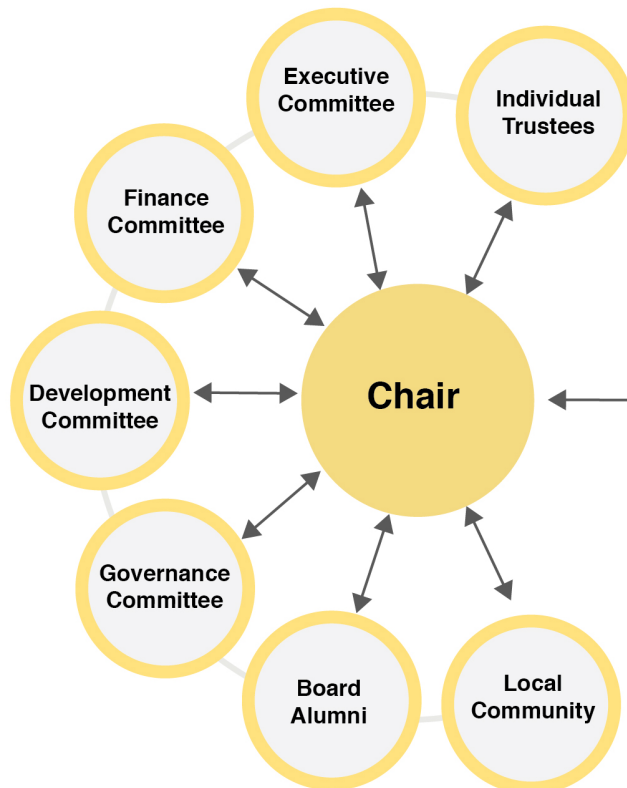


**Board:**

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Vision                            | 4. Bylaws              |
| 2. Strategic Goals and<br>"Road Map" | 5. Financial Oversight |
| 3. Governance                        | 6. Development Support |
|                                      | 7. Board Education     |

**Head of School:**

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Strategic and Tactical<br>Implementation of<br>"Road Map" | 3. Staffing         |
| 2. Budgeting   | 4. Operations       |
|  | 5. Programs         |
|  | 6. School Community |



**Also:**  
Crisis Management  
PR + News  
CPA/Attorney

# The Governance Dichotomy: Govern and Support

## The Board as a Whole - GOVERNS

- Determine mission and purpose
- Hire, evaluate, and support the Head of School
- Strategic planning
- Ensure adequate financial resources
- Protect assets and provide proper financial oversight
- Build a competent board, orientation, self evaluation
- Ensure legal and ethical integrity

## Individual Trustees - SUPPORT

- Fully participate in board and committee meetings
- Financial support
- Fiduciary responsibility
- Separate interests of the school from the needs of your child
- Accept and support board decisions
- Support the school and the HOS in the community
- Confidentiality
- Law of no surprises

# Board's Responsibilities



1. Fiduciary, strategic, and generative
2. Hire, evaluate, support, **collaborate** with the HOS
2. Define and support the mission, vision, and values
3. Ensure a sustainable future through generative thinking and strategic planning
4. Understand governance best practices — specifically the difference between governing and administering
5. Ensure proper financial oversight, grow financial resources, and manage assets
6. Build an effective board  
(Including: recruitment, on-boarding, education, strong committees structure, and self assessment)
7. Hold the school “in trust”

# Non-Negotiable Norms for Boards

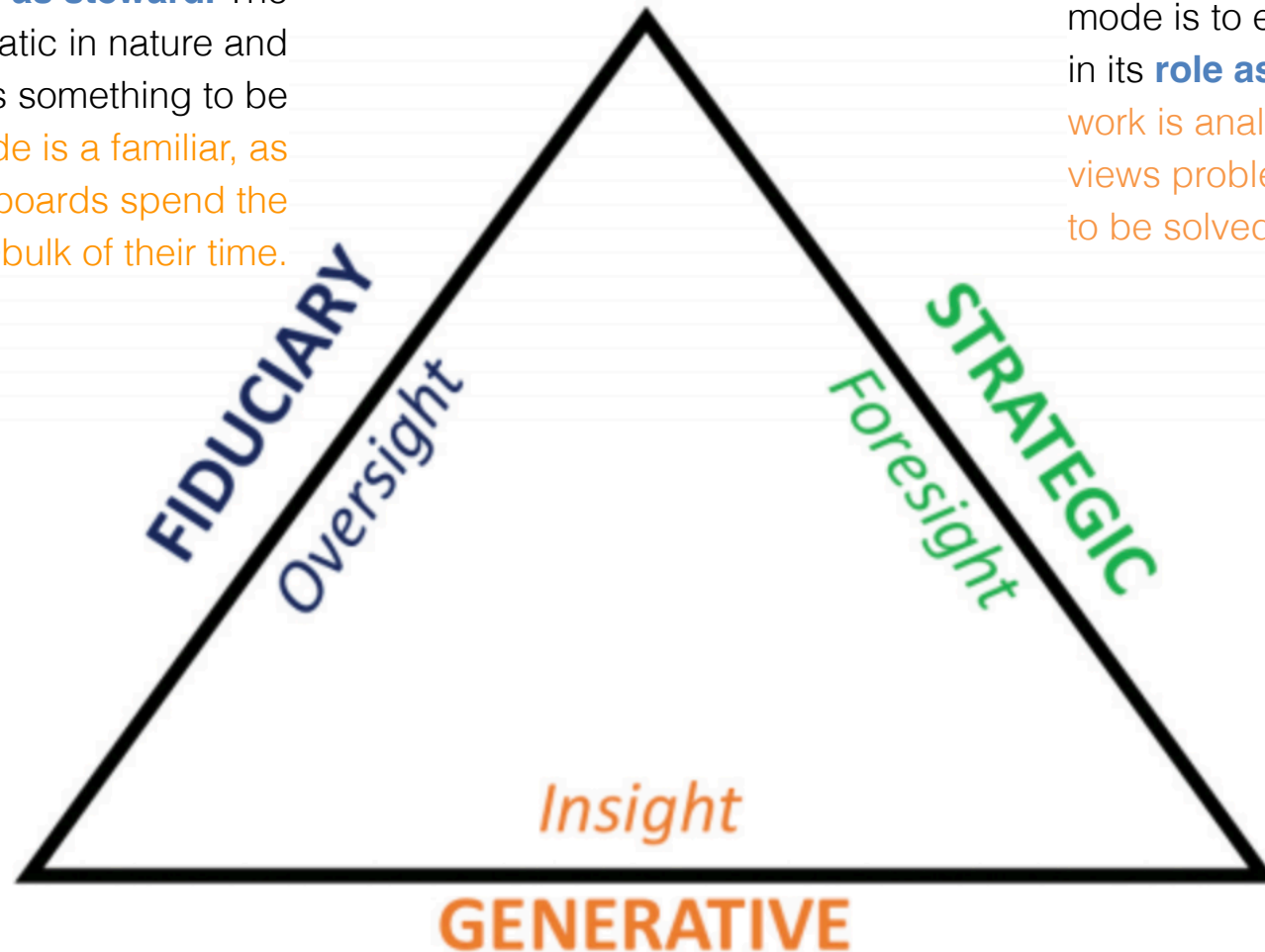
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- **Preparedness:** Come to the meeting ready to engage with the agenda
- **The 80/20 Rule:** Do not hold the group hostage to any personal agenda, and employ an 80/20 decision-making principle—do we have adequate information to proceed?
- **Confidentiality:** Create an environment where people can freely share without fear
- **One Voice:** Leave with messages that present a united front
- **Climate:** Grapple with tough issues/challenges while assuming good intent and seeking to understand
- **Deliberations:** Base decisions on as much information-gathering as possible
- **Philanthropy/ Financial Support:** Giving and friend-raising

**Generative thinking** reframes a board's work by fostering each trustee's ability to serve as a **thought-leader** who is able to ask catalytic questions, frame problems, and grapple with complexity.

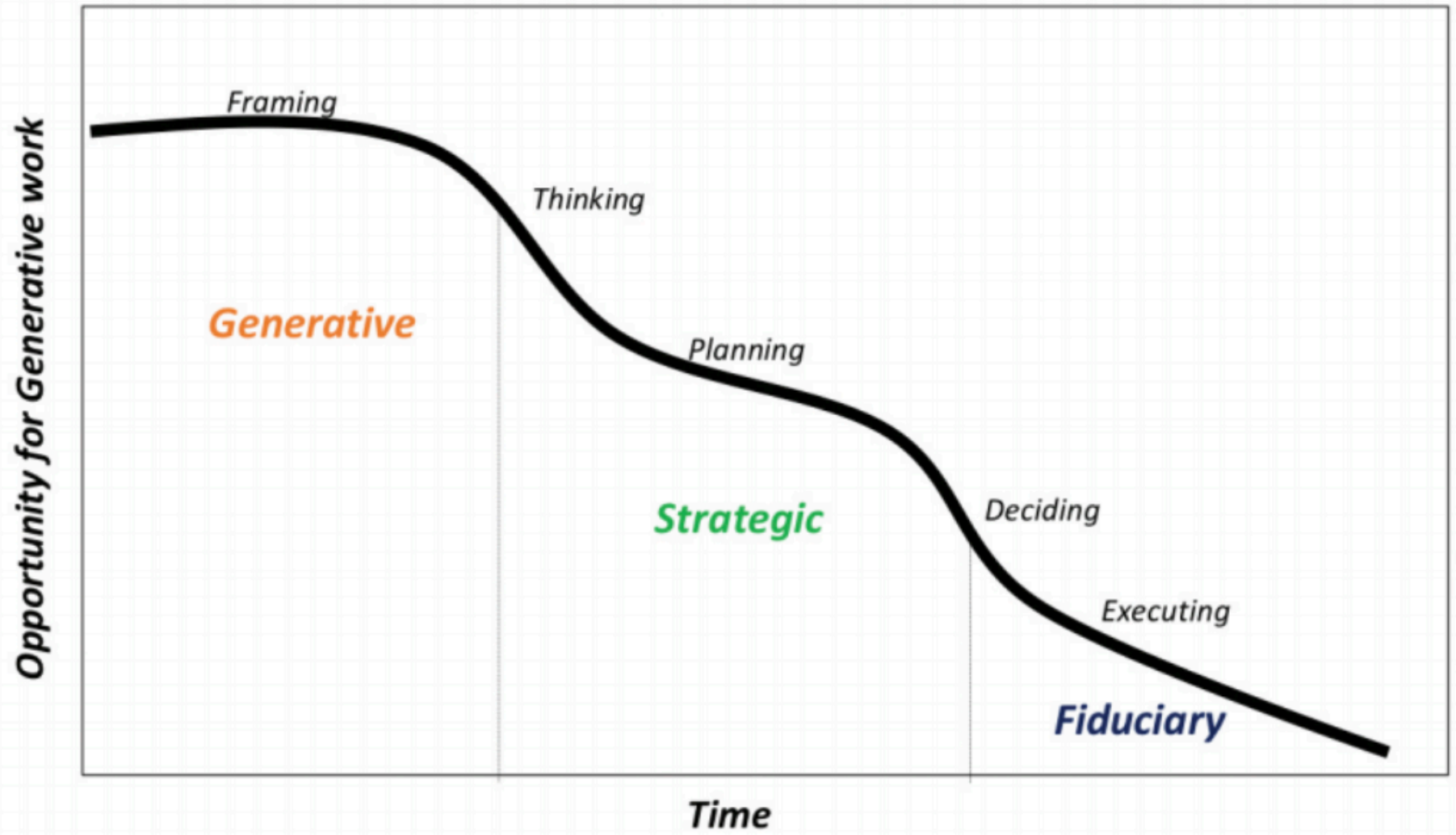


In the **fiduciary mode** the board's primary function is to exercise oversight, in its **role as steward**. The work is bureaucratic in nature and views problems as something to be identified. *This mode is a familiar, as it is where many boards spend the bulk of their time.*



In the **strategic mode** the board's primary function in this mode is to exercise foresight, in its **role as strategist**. *This work is analytical in nature, and views problems as something to be solved.*

In the **generative mode** the board's central purpose in this mode is to develop insight in its **role as a sense-maker**. Generative work is non-linear and non-rational in nature, embraces divergent viewpoints, questions assumptions, and views problems as something to be framed. *When working in this mode, a board functions as a sort of think tank, with conversations that are looser and more free flowing.*



## Board Behaviors in Each Governance Mode

	<b>Fiduciary</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Generative</b>
Key Question	What's Wrong?	What's the Plan?	What's the Question?
Board Focus	Define Problems, Review Performance	Solve Problems, Shape Strategy	Frame Problems, Engage in Sense-Making
Board Process	Parliamentary Procedure	Logistical and Empirical Discussion	More Informal and Creative
Problems Are to Be...	Spotted	Solved	Framed
Decision Making	Resolution	Reaching Consensus	Framing the Question

**What does this look like in practice?**



**Ambassadorship – It's more than just support!**

# When You're a Parent and a Trustee



- Remember your role in the boardroom
- Maintain confidentiality out of the boardroom
- Know when to refer to the Head of School
- Acknowledge power imbalance







Culture

# Culture

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Peter Drucker



- Strong purpose based on core values
- Well-being, belonging, and inclusive
- Trust and candor
- Collaboration, partnership and teamwork
- Good communication
- Culture of feedback
- Thoughtful and productive resolution
- A willingness to address poor board behavior
- Engagement and loyalty
- Opportunities for growth
- Celebrating good work
- Culture of generative thinking

## Some Indicators that the board culture needs attention:



- Focusing on tactics instead of strategy
- Suggests specific program improvements as opposed to policy changes
- Has executive session without the HOS and are reluctant to inform them of the outcome
- Makes budget and financial decisions without collaboration with the HOS
- Committees not functioning
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of clear and common values
- Individuals not feeling valued or supported

# Challenging Conditions That Can Test A Board

Changes of leadership

Financial pressures

Personal issues

Lack of good governance understanding

Disruptions in the school community

Reputation issues

Low admissions

Economy impacts on school community

Change of seasons

Community polarization

Uncertainty

Constant state of elections

Climate Changes

## Information you valuable to your role as trustee:



- History One Pager
- Staff Organizational Chart
- Parent Handbook
- Program Highlights for the Year To Date
- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- List of All Current Board Members
- List of Board Committees, Charge, and Members of Each
- List of Upcoming Meetings
- Marking Your Calendars
- Any Strategic Planning Document
- Approved Budget for the Calendar Year
- Most Recently Monthly Financials
- Most Recent Audited Financial Statement
- A Copy of the Organization's By-Laws
- Fundraising Status/Goals One Pager
- Board Meeting Minutes
- Agenda for the First Board Meeting

# Partnership



# Headship Yesterday and Today

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## 2009 Leadership Challenges

- Providing vision
- Managing their school's climate and values
- Working with their boards

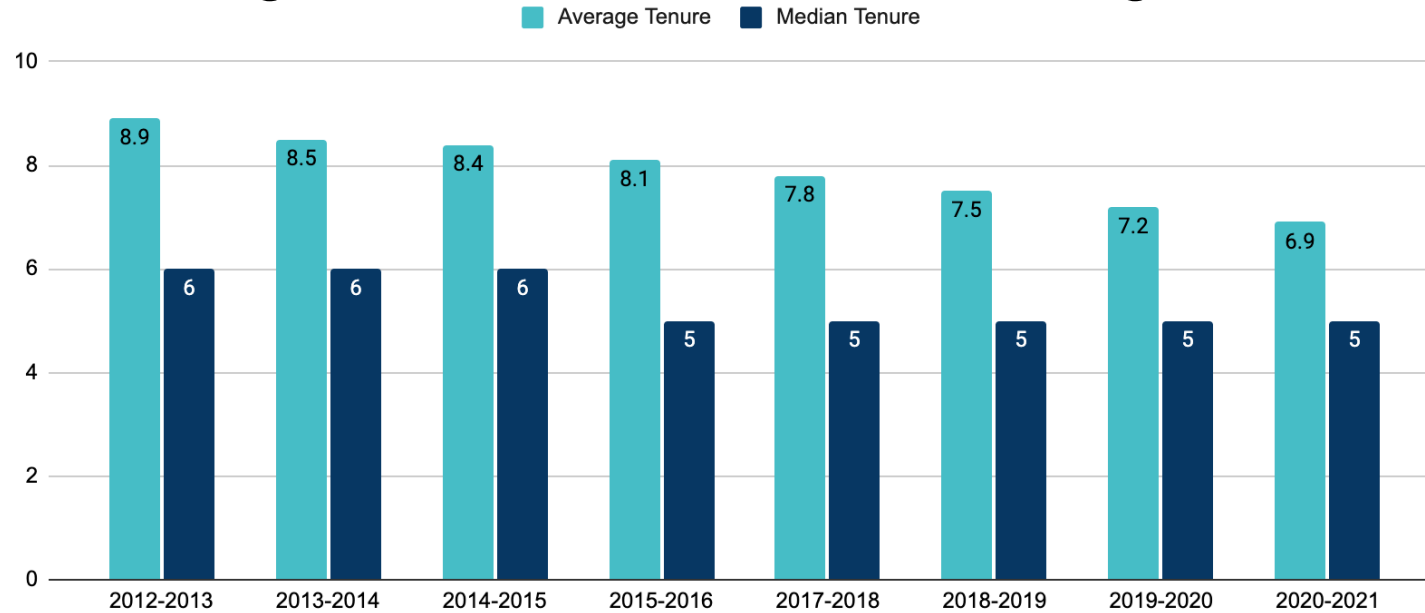
## 2021 Leadership Challenges

- Increased pressure and stress
- Isolation
- Helping their school communities address the pandemic, racial injustice, and economic insecurity and overall uncertainty

Source: NAIS Leadership Study

# How Long Are Heads Staying?

## Average and Median Tenure for All Sitting Heads



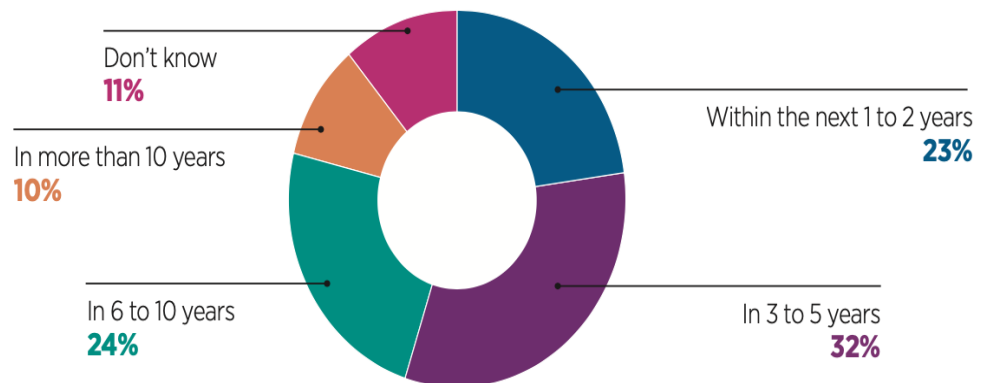
Source: DASL

# Leadership Transitions Are on the Rise

- Unexpected head of school turnover increased **8% in 2010 to 25% in 2022-2023** (NAIS)
- Turnover data indicates that **1 in 5 new heads** who started in 2020-2021 will leave after three years or less (NAIS). And **one in four heads who started in 2019-2020 are no longer in their role.**
- In the 2021 NAIS report *The State of Independent School Leadership*, nearly **55% of heads of school** indicated that they plan to leave their current position within 1-5 years

FIGURE 3: Heads' Future Plans, 2021

LOOKING FORWARD, WOULD YOU SAY YOU PLAN TO TRANSITION FROM THIS HEADSHIP...



Source: Margaret Anne Rowe, *The State of Independent School Leadership 2021*, NAIS

# Insights from the 2021 NAIS State of Independent School Leadership Survey

**61% of NAIS administrators intend to leave their current position by 2026.** 43% said their career plans were affected by the pandemic, especially admins of color (49%) and LGBTQ+ admins (64%).

**55%** of heads intend to depart by 2026.

Of those, 11% plan to leave the sector, 28% plan to change schools, and 37% plan to retire. (Others are undecided.)

**40%** said their career plans were affected by the pandemic, especially female heads (49%), heads of color (48%), and LGBTQ+ heads (57%).

## BOARD-HEAD PARTNERSHIP: TIME AND ATTENTION

**Policies**  
**Strategies**  
Mission  
Survival  
Leadership

**BOARD'S DECISIONS**

**HEAD'S  
ADVICE**

**Partnership**  
Authorizations  
Finance policies  
Enrollment  
Employment Terms

**SHARED DECISIONS:  
BOARD AND HEAD**

**Operational**  
Admissions  
Staffing  
Program  
Systems

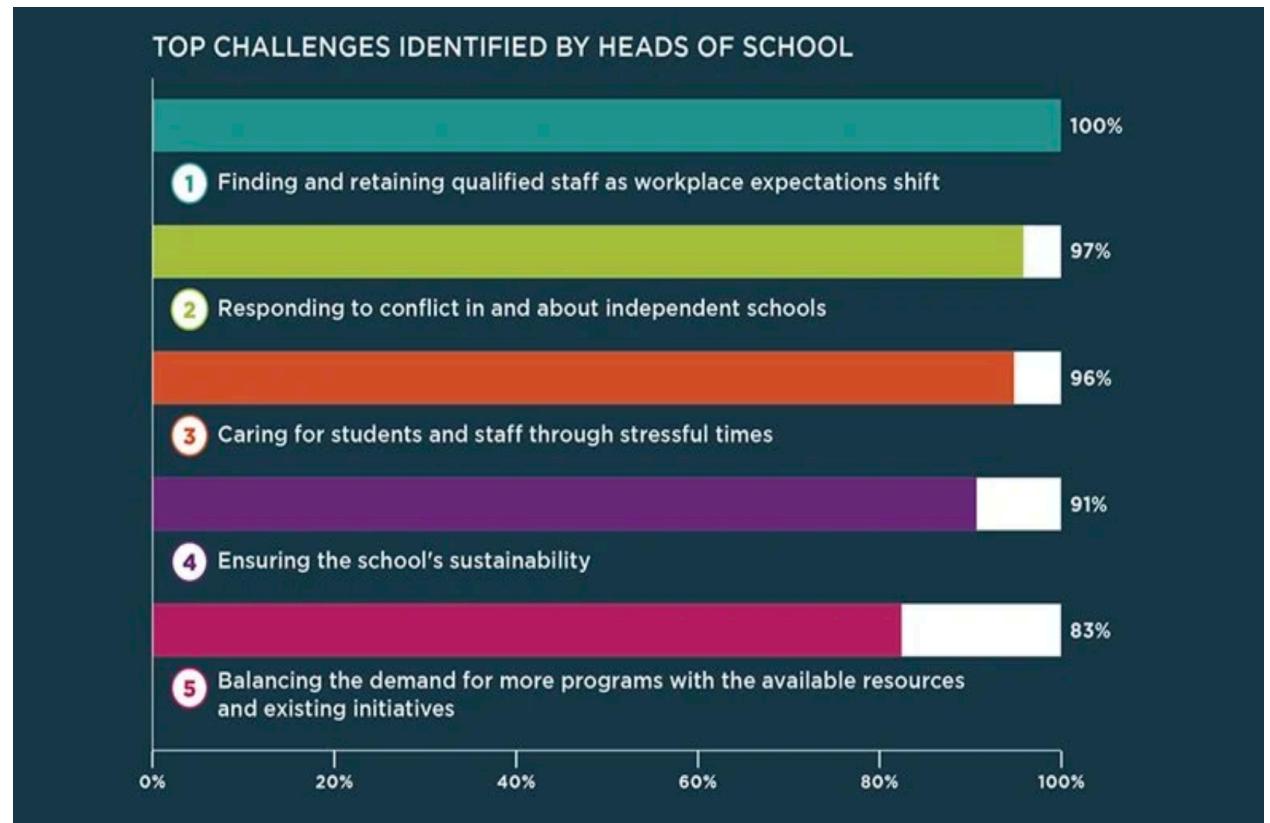
**BOARD'S  
ADVICE**

**HEAD'S DECISIONS**

# How the Board/Head Relationship Works in Decision Making

# The National Perspective View

From the NAIS *Hot  
Issues Survey Report  
2023: Challenges and  
Opportunities for  
Independent Schools*





# Top Challenges Facing Independent Schools



- Employee recruitment and retention
- Affordability
- Community polarization
- Economic uncertainty
- Financial sustainability
- Enrollment
- Technology
- Demographics
- Student and employee health and well-being
- Parent expectations
- DEIJB
- Security and safety

# Case Studies + Group Discussion

# Time to Reflect



- What was one “A-HA” moment I had during our workshop?
- What information do I still need to better understand my role as a trustee?

## **Resources:**

1. National Association of Independent Schools -  
nais.org
2. Association of Colorado Independent Schools -  
acischools.com
3. National Business Officers Association - [https://  
www.nboa.org/viewdocument](https://www.nboa.org/viewdocument)
4. Monique Davis, Thinking Davis  
email: [monique@thinkingdavis.com](mailto:monique@thinkingdavis.com)  
Linkedin: Monique Davis

Expand your passion and purpose

Dive into collaboration

Put a rung on the ladder

Build something that serves the greater good



**Let's Stay  
in Touch!**

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