



Horace Mann League of the USA

Founded in 1922 to Support Public Education

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**An Honorary Association of
Public Education Leaders**

August 25, 2026

Greetings!

**Welcome
The HML Post,**

**News, Insights, and Perspectives
Shaping Public Education**

The HML Post is published every Tuesday to engage and inform the League's members of trends and issues facing public school leaders.

*If you change your email address, **please send us a note** so you can continue receiving the Post.*

Editor
James Minichello, Executive Director, The Horace Mann League

Thought of the Week



"Leadership is about inspiring people to go places they never dreamed they would go—to reach deep inside themselves to discover abilities they never knew they had and to feel part of something larger than themselves."

— Martin Brooks, former director, Tri-State Consortium; member, Horace Mann League Board of Directors

HML News



Editor's Note: The Doors Are Open

Across the country, the doors of our public schools are opening once again. For millions of students, educators, and families, the first day of school brings excitement, anticipation, and the promise of all that a new academic year can bring.

Behind every first-day welcome is an extraordinary amount of preparation—and leadership. We extend our gratitude to the superintendents, principals, teachers, support professionals, board members, and countless others who have worked throughout the summer to ensure their schools are ready. Each learning community has its own traditions, character, and source of pride, but all share an enduring commitment to the children and families they serve.

As another school year gets underway, the Horace Mann League celebrates that commitment and thanks you for the leadership you provide every day. May your schools be places where students feel welcomed, educators feel valued, families feel connected, and every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

On behalf of the Horace Mann League family, thank you for your continued leadership and steadfast commitment to public education.

(Photography by James Minichello)



Spotlight Conversations: Kenneth Spells

Spotlight Conversations is a Q&A series produced by the Horace Mann League highlighting leaders who are shaping today's public education landscape—individuals whose work reflects the League's

mission: that the public school system of the United States is an indispensable force in sustaining our democracy and a dynamic influence in American life.

It's a pleasure to speak with **Kenneth Spells**, superintendent of North Carolina's [Hoke County Schools](#), a learning community serving nearly 8,900 students.

HML: Please tell us about Hoke County Schools. Located just over an hour from Raleigh, what is your district best known for?

KS: We're located between Fayetteville, Fort Bragg, and Pinehurst, and we're especially known for serving a large military population. Supporting military-connected students and families is an important part of who we are.

HML: Hoke County Schools was recently recognized by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a Purple Star District, an honor that recognizes military-friendly schools and districts. What has this designation meant for your students and community?

KS: The Purple Star designation has strengthened our partnership with the military community. Each April, we host a celebration honoring our Purple Star families, reinforcing that military students and their parents are valued members of our district.

Military families are often highly mobile. It's important that they feel a sense of belonging right away. We want them to know they have a place here and a voice in our schools.

The designation has also become a recruiting tool. With three school districts serving families near Fort Bragg, parents have choices. We want Hoke County Schools to be viewed as a destination district, and our commitment to military families helps set us apart.

HML: What are some of the biggest challenges facing your district?

KS: One of our greatest responsibilities is telling our story. That means providing excellent customer service to parents and community members while ensuring everyone has a seat at the table. When people feel heard and included, they develop a sense of ownership in the district, and that ultimately strengthens the entire community.

HML: How would you describe the Hoke County story?

KS: Our story is about providing every student with a high-quality education while creating opportunities that meet their individual needs. Hoke County is a special place with tremendous potential. Our

goal is to ensure every graduate is prepared to compete—whether they're pursuing college, the workforce, or another path after graduation.

HML: Summer provides school leaders with an opportunity to reflect on the past year while preparing for the next. What are some of your priorities as you look toward the new school year?

KS: We're excited to open a new comprehensive high school, which is expected to be completed next month. It's a tremendous investment in our students and community.

Academically, we're focused on literacy and mathematics while helping students avoid summer learning loss. Our "Rising Stars" program prepares incoming kindergarten students for a successful start, and we're also providing access to online learning opportunities throughout the summer to keep students engaged.

HML: What does it mean to you to be a member of the Horace Mann League Board of Directors?

KS: For me, it's simple. I grew up in Bladen County, North Carolina, where my high school enrolled about 500 students. Today, I'm fortunate to serve as a superintendent, and I want to be a champion for public education.

The Horace Mann League has always been a champion for public schools. I want today's students to have even more opportunities than I had and to be prepared to seize them when they arise.

Serving on the Board has also been a tremendous learning experience. We have outstanding thought leaders who bring different perspectives from across the country. We share ideas, discuss challenges, and learn from one another—all with the common goal of better serving students.

HML: Before we conclude, is there anything else you'd like to share?

KS: I truly enjoy serving on the Horace Mann League Board. The League has been a steadfast champion for public education, and strong public schools are essential to helping every student achieve success and pursue the American dream.

HML: Ken, thank you for sharing your insights and for your continued leadership. We appreciate your leadership and service to Hoke County Schools, the Horace Mann League, and public education.



Facing 'Techlash,' How Should Schools Talk to Parents About Tech Use?

by Arianna Prothero / *Education Week*

A school communications expert explains how schools should approach their messaging around tech.

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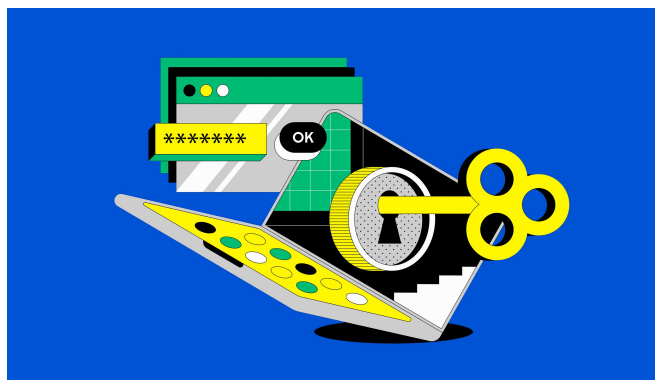


Guiding Middle School Students to Commit to Their Own Growth

by Brian Cunningham / *Edutopia*

This mentoring framework can help students with discipline referrals see that they have the ability and responsibility to shape their future.

[Read More](#)



Dylan Kane Went Tech-Free for a Year. Here's What He Learned

by Andrew Boryga / *Edutopia*

After replacing Chromebook activities with paper and pencils, the middle school math teacher thoughtfully considers the costs and benefits.

[Read More](#)

Issues of the Week



Apple Users Beware: ChatGPT's Newest Mac Feature Could Pose a Major Privacy Risk

by Kit Eaton / *Inc.*

OpenAI's new iMessage integration is a massive time-saver for personal use, but granting the AI access to your contacts and data could be a nightmare for company security.

[Read More](#)



FCC opens comment period on E-rate's future

by Anna Merod / *K-12 Dive*

E-rate, which provides discounted internet services to build connectivity for schools, gave \$10.5 billion to districts between 2021 and 2025.

[Read More](#)



The Most Advantaged Students Attend the Best-Funded Colleges. Does it Have to Be This Way?

by Matt Barnum / *Chalkbeat*

A new paper traces how family income, test scores, and educational spending rise together.

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Leadership Ideas



When You're Held to a Different Standard, Defy Expectations

by Matt Zalaznick / *District Administration*

Female leaders in K12 are held to a different standard. Superintendent Zandra Jo Galván has an answer: defy expectations.

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Lindsay Burns and the Power of Asking Better Questions

by Katherina Davis / *CEOWorld Magazine*

Most careers in biotechnology are built around answers. Lindsay Burns built hers around questions.

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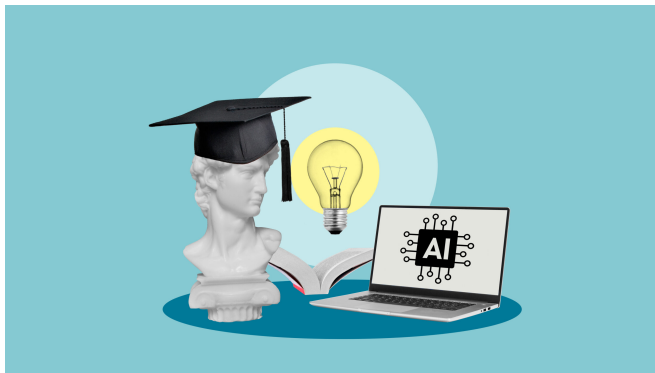
This Network Gave These Leaders the Support They Were Missing

by Micah Ward / *District Administration*

For women, the superintendency can be more competitive than uplifting, says one leader. This network changed that.

[Read More](#)

AI



Here's a Realistic Way to Introduce AI in Elementary School

by Micah Ward / *District Administration*

Leaders can employ low-barrier-to-entry tech that teaches students foundational AI concepts, not how to code.

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Schools Spend Billions on AI, But Struggle to Figure Out What's Worth Buying

by Robbie Sequeira for *Education Week*

Some school district officials feel overwhelmed by the array of choices of AI learning tools.

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HML Wants to Hear From You

Share Your Story With the League

One of the greatest strengths of the Horace Mann League is the remarkable work our members do every day on behalf of students, schools, and communities.



As a new academic year gets underway, we want to hear what's happening in your schools, districts, organizations, and communities. We invite you to share your accomplishments—or those of a member of your staff—including publications, awards, leadership transitions, innovative programs, noteworthy events, and other news that may be of interest to fellow members.

Your stories help strengthen our community, celebrate the important work taking place across the country, and inspire fellow League

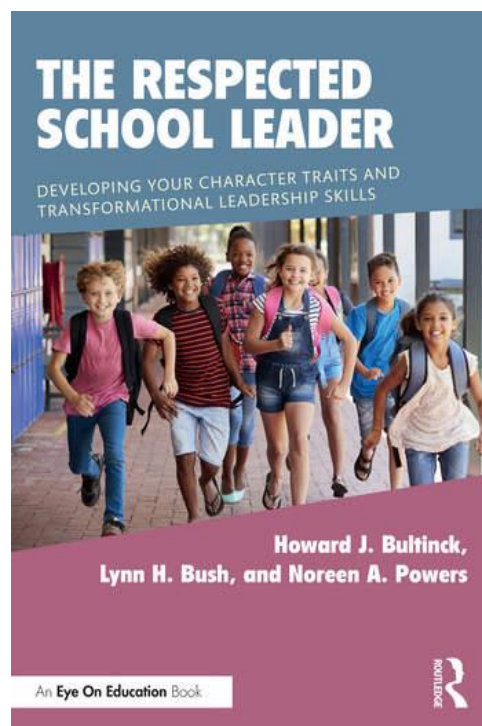
members. As we plan upcoming editions of *The Post*, we hope you'll share your story with us.

Please send submissions and ideas to James Minichello, executive director of the Horace Mann League, at jminichello@hmleague.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Featured Book

This book offers an unprecedented look at a key component to becoming a collaborative, inclusive, and transformational school leader: respect.

This practical resource takes you on a journey to achieve the highest level of respect as a school leader and includes a groundbreaking model that defines “respect” and provides you with specific tools to determine whether you’ve attained respect and how to leverage this for personal growth, success, and for sustainable school improvement.



Spotlight Conversations



Tobin Novasio, Superintendent of Montana's Hardin Public Schools

"In rural education, our greatest strength is the power of relationships."

"The future of rural communities depends on our ability to attract, support, and retain great educators."



Louis Wool, Superintendent of New York's Harrison Central School District

"If we don't see that connection, that very precious thing that has defined my life, given me so much opportunity, can soon be gone. And when we lose public school, in my mind, we lose America."



The Horace Mann League's Video Archives

[HML Gallery 1996-2023](#)

[2023 Annual Meeting Video -Presidents and Boards](#)

[HML Board Meeting and Annual Meeting 2015](#)

[The Iceberg Effect - Student Achievement](#)

Special Reports for League Members

Click on the title to view (and download) the topic of interest.

1. [Wisdom and Leadership](#) (updated on May 11, 2026)
2. [Letters to the Editor from the Superintendent](#) (updated on June 9 2026)
3. [Arguments by Conservatives to Diminish Public Schools. \(New\)](#)
4. [OP-ED Letters to the Editor: Ideological and Policy Arguments About Public Education \(new\)](#)
5. [Most Common Theories of Leadership](#)
6. [Long-Range Planning](#)
7. [Quotes for Leadership](#)
8. [Good to Great: The Guide to the Superintendent's Success](#)
9. [The Blueberry Story: Operating Schools Like a Business.](#)
10. [What Teachers Make: Wow! You Asked Me What I make?](#)
11. [Better Interview Questions and Possible Responses](#)
12. [Suggestions Guidelines for Better Presentations](#)
13. [Opening the Schoolhouse Door for Patrons](#)
14. [Signals in the Life of the Superintendent](#)
15. [Best Leadership Quotes of All](#)

Podcasts by Education Leaders

The Horace Mann League's Podcast Series. (Click on the [blue](#) title to listen.)

Glenn Robbins: Nationally recognized leader in education technology.

Glenn was recently honored with the 2026 School Leader of the Year Award from EdTech Digest. During the conversation, he reflects on what the recognition means to him, his district, and the Brigantine community.



A Tribute to David Berliner by Dr. Gene Sharratt.

We honor the life and legacy of Dr. David Berliner, one of the most influential education researchers of our time and a steadfast advocate for public education and democracy.

Growing Partnerships that Strengthen Learning Communities by David Law, President of AASA and Superintendent of the Minnetonka Public Schools.

Rural Schools are the Backbone of Many Communities by Dr. Melissa Sadorf, Executive Director of the National Rural Education Association.

On Fire, Under Fire, or Fired: Reclaiming Passion, Purpose, & Progress in Troubling Times by Dr. Kristi Wilson and Dr. Susan Enfield.

Schools Reimagined with Dr. Jacqueline Grennon Brooks. Unifying the Science of Learning.

Path to Leadership by Dr. Martha Bruckner
Suggestions for women educators striving to advance their careers in education administration.

Artificial Intelligence in School Settings by Dr. Ray McNulty

Equity Paradoxes Created by Educational Policies
Dr. Alfredo J. Artiles:

Diversity in America: Teaching Students to Know, to Care, & to Act in Global Times by Dr. James Banks

Women in Leadership by Andi Furlis

Andi Furlis describes her career journey and shares suggestions for women seeking to grow their public education careers.

The Journey with Dr. Jack McKay. An opportunity to meet some great public educators.

Artificial Intelligence, the Landscape of Public Schools by Joshua Starr

Artificial Intelligence and the impact it has on public education today by Ben Williamson

Equity and Leadership with Gary Orfield and Patricia Gande

The Future of Public Education with Gloria Ladson Billings, professor at the University of Wisconsin. (Annual Meeting Presentation)

Democracy and Education: The Crisis of our Times with David Berliner and Joel Westheimer

The Future of Public Education with Valerie Strauss, education journalist for the Washington Post. (Annual Meeting Presentation)

Why Public Education is the Best Safety Net for Democracy with James Harvey and Jimmy Minnichello.

Recent Supreme Court Decision and the Implications for Public Schools with Derek Black and Jessica Levin.

Equity and Equality in the Public Schools with Linda Darling Hammond and Joshua Starr.

The U.S. Dept. of Education and the Local Public School with Secretary Miguel Cardona and Julie Underwood.

Critical Race Theory and School Board Meetings with Bryan Brayboy, Adrienne Dixson, and Daniel G. Solorzano.

The Implications of Charters and Privatization of Public Education with Carol Burris and Kevin Welner

Challenges and Opportunities of Leading with Jeanne Collins, Doug Burge, and Laurie Barron.

Leading a School District During a Pandemic with Jim Sutfin, Luvelle Brown, and Andi Fourlis.

Thoughts on the State of Public Education by David Berliner and Diane Ravitch.

Notable Books and Reports for Members

Click on the title to download.
Long-Range Planning -
(Strategic Plans: Benefits and Consequences)

Good to Great: The Guide to the Superintendent's Success by Jack McKay



The Guide for Using AI - ChatGPT (Getting Started)

The Book of Wisdom (Good coffee - Great Friendships)

The School Leader's Special Topics

1. Better Interview Questions and Possible Responses
 2. Suggestions Guidelines for Better Presentations
 3. Opening the Schoolhouse Door for Patrons
 4. Signals in the Life of the Superintendent
 5. Best Leadership Quotes of All
 6. Horace Mann: An Exemplar of Reform
 7. The Blueberry Story
 8. What Teachers Make. . .
 9. **Examples of "Letters to the Editor"** (updated)
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OH

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Hammond**

Purpose

The Horace Mann League, founded in 1922, perpetuates the ideals of Horace Mann, the founder of the American public school system. Its basic purpose and activities are to strengthen our public schools.

The League's members believe that the public school system of the United States is an indispensable agency for strengthening the ideals of our democracy and the most necessary unifying and dynamic influence in American life.

Accordingly, our public schools should be free, classless, non-sectarian, and open to all children of all the people. The school system should be dominated by such purposes that will insure the preparation of children and youth for effective citizenship in our democracy.

The League believes that the American tradition of separation of church and state must

The Horace Mann League Past Presidents

2025 Kevin Riley, (NE)
2024 Brent Clark, (IL)
2023 Bill Mathis (VT)
2022 Ruben Alejandro (TX)
2021 James Harvey (WA)
2020 Lisa Parady AK
2019 Laurie Barron, MT
2018 Eric King, IL
2017 Martha Bruckner IA
2016 Christine Johns, MI
2015 Charles Fowler, NH
2014 Gary Marx, VA
2013 Joe Hairston, MD
2012 Mark Edwards NC
2011 Julie Underwood, WI
2010 George Garcia, CO
2009 Steve Rasmussen, WA
2008 Fred Hartmeister, TX
2007 Colleen Wilcox, CA
2006 Walt Warfield, IL
2005 John Simpson, VA
2004 Spike Jorgensen, AK
2003 Larry Dlugosh NE
2002 Arthur Stellar, MI
2001 Ben Canada, OR
2000 Kenneth Bird NE
1999 Beverly Reep OH
1998 Jane Hammond CO
1997 Cleve Hammonds MO
1996 Terry Grier, CA
1995 Paul Houston, VA
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1993 Malcolm Katz, GA
1992 Bob Fortenberry, MS

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Palo Alto, CA
Dr. Jim Lloyd,
Supt., Omstead Falls schools, OH
Mr. Tobin Novasio, Supt, Hardin School Districts,
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Supt. of Schools
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Dr. Michael Simeck,
Supt. Deerfield 109 (IL).
Dr. Kenneth Spells,
Supt., Hoke County School District, Raeford, NC
Dr. Jerry Thacker, Supt. Penn-Harris-Madison School, Mishawaka, (IN)
Dr. Louis N, Wool,
Supt of School, Harrison Central School District (NY)
Dr. Greg Wyman
Exec. Dir., Arizona Rural Schools Association

Executive Director
of the HML
James Minichello
Alexandria, VA

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2023-24 Jeanne Collins
1993-23 Jack McKay
1992-93 Paul Rossey
1977-91 Robert Fleischer
1972-77 Clayton Hutchins
1963-71 William Early
1959-63 Benjamin Smith
1955-59 E.I. Williams
1946-54 Joy Elmer Morgan
1925-45 Carroll Pearse
1924 Robert Wright
1923 John R. Kirk
1922 John A. Smith

be preserved and should be most vigorously and zealously safeguarded. The League grants the right to special interest groups, including various religious sects, to maintain their own schools so long as such schools meet the standards defined by the states in which they are located. The League believes that these separate or non-public schools should be financed entirely by their supporters. It is therefore unalterably opposed to proposals to devote public funds to the direct or indirect support of private schools. The League favors the generous financial support of the public schools by local, state, and federal funds. It believes, however, that those federal grants should be so made that there will be no federal control or interference in local schools' administration, curriculum, personnel, or instructional procedures.

1991 Ron Etheridge, OH
1990 John Prasch NE
1989 Jack Mawdsley, MI
1988 Linton Deck NC
1987 Patrick Hoban WA
1986 M Donald Thomas UT
1985 Anne Campbell NE
1984 Floyd W. Parsons AR
1983 Paul Shelly NJ
1982 Orvin Plucker KS
1981 Albert Ayers VA
1980 Ken Hansen CO
1979 Homer Elseroad CO
1978 W J. House NC
1977 Paul Rossey NJ
1976 Charles Weaver NC
1975 Frank Yulo CT
1974 Archibald Shaw MI
1973 George Brain WA
1972 Mildred F. Reed DC
1971 Eugene Mellon IL
1970 Walter Hetzel IA
1968 Chester Swanson CA
1967 Phillip Weaver NC
1966 Edward Rutter CT
1965 Shirley Cooper WV
1964 Lynn Bennion UT
1963 John L Buford IL
1962 Frank W. Cyr NY
1960 L. Stacy Weaver NC
1959 Edgar Fuller DC
1958 Richard Kennan MD
1957 Henry H. Hill TN
1955 Selmer H. Berg CA
1953 Virgil Rogers VA
1951 Mark A. Smith GA
1950 Benjamin L. Smith NC
1948 I. E. F. Williams OH
1947 James Edmonson MI
1946 Howard Driggs NY
1944 Homer Anderson MA
1942 Harold J. Benjamin MD
1941 L.J. Nuttall UT
1940 Alexander Stoddard RI
1939 Willard Given DC
1938 John Sexton CA
1937 Millard Leffler NE
1936 Ben G. Graham PA
1935 John K. Norton NY
1934 H Lester Smith IN
1933 E.E. Oberholtzer TX
1932 Fred M. Hunter OR
1931 George Strayer NY
1930 George M. Child UT

1926 Payson Smith ME
1922 Carroll Pearce WI



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