



Horace Mann League of the USA

Founded in 1922 to Support Public Education

Contact Us

Become A Member

**An Honorary Association of
Public Education Leaders**

June 16, 2026

Greetings!

**Welcome
The HML Post,**

**Research and Opinions About
Leadership in 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.

Some of the articles in this newsletter are condensed using ChaptGPT.

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

Editors

James Minichello, Executive Director

Jack McKay, Contributor



Thought of the Week

"Remember why public schools exist. They do not exist to satisfy every faction. They exist to educate every child. Listen carefully, treat every citizen with respect, seek common ground whenever possible, and remain faithful to the larger purpose of public education. Temporary controversies will pass. The work of preparing the next generation for citizenship will remain."

-

Horace Mann

This Week's Topics

Thought of the Week

1. Fraud, Waste, and Misuse of K–12 Public Funds
2. Examples of Fraud and Misuse of Public Funds
3. Why Have People Historically Quit Their Jobs?

4. Spotlight Conversations: The Interview with Superintendent Dr. Louis Wool
5. Improve Civic Engagement in Their Communities
6. The Ten Most Important Strategies of Successful Negotiators
7. Your Birth Order Affects Your Future
8. Leadership in an Era of Polarization: A Leadership Guide
9. A Potential Leadership Resource: Dealing with Polarization
10. Polarization Is Not Our Destiny: Letter to the Editor
11. Horace Mann During: In Times of Community Polarization?
12. The Strangest Secret (Often Called The Secret of Success)
13. Predictable Struggles That Thwart Education Leadership
14. Laws of Leadership and Life
15. Ten Best Leadership Skills
16. Great Advice When With Others
17. Cultivate Those Who Can Teach You
18. When Mo Is Against You
19. 16 Things High-Performing Organizations Do Differently
20. AI's Real Question Isn't Whether AI Arrives
21. Model Policy for the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
22. AI Skills Every High School Graduate Should Possess
23. Great Advice When With Others
24. Horace Mann League Spotlight Conversations
25. Special Reports for League Members.
26. The Horace Mann League's Podcast Series.
27. Notable Books and Reports for Members
28. Cartoon for the Week

Fraud, Waste and Misuse of K–12 Public Funds

By Greg Wyman.

The article examines accountability in publicly funded education. Wyman argues that concerns about fraud, waste, and misuse of taxpayer dollars should apply equally to all educational programs receiving public funds, including voucher and Education Savings Account (ESA) programs.



- **Arizona's ESA program is presented as a case study.** The article cites reporting that identified purchases of prohibited or questionable items using ESA funds, including expenditures that appeared unrelated to educational purposes. Wyman contends these examples raise legitimate concerns about oversight and accountability.

- **The debate often shifts from substance to semantics.** Defenders of the program focused on whether the expenditures legally constituted "fraud" rather than addressing the broader question of whether public education dollars were used appropriately.
- **Public schools operate under extensive oversight requirements.** Traditional public schools are subject to numerous laws, audits, public meetings, procurement rules, financial reporting requirements, and elected board oversight designed to safeguard taxpayer funds.
- **There is a regulatory imbalance.** A central theme is that voucher and ESA programs often operate under significantly fewer statutory and reporting requirements than traditional public schools, despite receiving public funds.
- **Transparency is presented as a strength of public education.** The extensive accountability systems governing public schools are not burdens but essential protections that help identify mistakes, correct problems, and maintain public trust.
- **Equal accountability standards.** All institutions receiving taxpayer-supported education funding should be held to comparable standards of transparency, oversight, and financial accountability. He argues that applying consistent rules across all publicly funded educational programs would create a fairer and more productive policy discussion.

Implications for School Leaders

- Public trust depends heavily on transparency and financial stewardship.
- School choice debates are increasingly shifting from questions of access to questions of accountability.
- Superintendents should be prepared to explain how public schools are audited, governed, and monitored.
- Policymakers may face growing pressure to apply similar reporting and oversight requirements to all publicly funded educational providers.
- The issue highlights a broader policy question: Should public dollars carry the same accountability requirements regardless of where students attend school?

While no educational system is immune from mistakes or misuse of funds, traditional public schools operate within a robust framework of public oversight. If taxpayers expect accountability for public schools, he contends that the same expectation should apply to every educational program receiving public funds.

Examples of Fraud and Misuse of Public Funds

For advocates of traditional public education, the strongest argument is often not that charter schools are inherently fraudulent, but that any school receiving taxpayer dollars should meet the same standards of public accountability and financial transparency.

1. Most charter schools are not involved in fraud.
2. There have been several well-documented cases in which charter operators misused or fraudulently obtained taxpayer funds.

Here are five of the most significant examples.

1. A3 Education Charter School Fraud

(California)

Estimated Fraud: Approximately \$400 million

What Happened

- A3 Education operated a network of 19 non-classroom-based charter schools.
- Operators inflated enrollment counts and claimed state funding for students who were not genuinely participating.
- Prosecutors found that the organization enrolled students primarily to collect state funding and diverted substantial amounts to companies controlled by the operators.



Outcome

- Eleven individuals were charged.
- Multiple executives pleaded guilty or were convicted.
- California officials described it as the largest charter-school fraud case in state history.

Lesson

Weak oversight of enrollment and attendance reporting can create opportunities for abuse.

2. Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) – Ohio

Estimated Improper Funding: \$60–80 million

What Happened

- ECOT became one of the nation's largest online charter schools.
- State audits found the school claimed funding for students whose participation could not be verified.
- Ohio courts ultimately upheld findings that ECOT had overstated attendance and enrollment for funding purposes.

Outcome

- The state sought repayment of tens of millions of dollars.
- ECOT eventually closed.

Lesson

Virtual charter schools can present unique accountability challenges because attendance is harder to verify than in traditional schools.

3. Celerity Educational Group (California)

Estimated Misappropriation: Millions of Public Dollars

What Happened

- Founder Vielka McFarlane admitted participating in a scheme to misuse public charter-school funds.
- According to federal prosecutors, taxpayer money was used for luxury travel, fine dining, personal expenses, and real-estate purchases unrelated to student learning.

Outcome

- Federal criminal charges and guilty pleas followed.
- Restitution and penalties were imposed.

Lesson

When financial controls are weak and boards lack independence, misuse of funds can occur.

4. Urban Prep Charter Academy (Chicago)

Misappropriation Alleged: More than \$100,000

What Happened

- Federal prosecutors charged the former CEO with embezzling charter-school funds for personal credit-card expenses.
- The indictment alleged misuse of public funds and efforts to obstruct the investigation.

Outcome

- Federal criminal prosecution.

Lesson

Charter schools require the same financial oversight and auditing standards expected of traditional public-school systems.

5. Inflated Enrollment and Attendance Scandals

Multiple States

What Happened

- Numerous investigations have uncovered charter schools that received funding based on exaggerated student enrollment or attendance counts.
- In several cases, schools received millions in overpayments before audits detected discrepancies.

Outcome

- School closures.
- State investigations.
- Recovery efforts for taxpayer funds.

Lesson

Enrollment verification and independent auditing are essential safeguards for any publicly funded school.

Broader Research Findings

Several watchdog groups and researchers have documented recurring patterns in charter-school scandals:

1. Inflated enrollment counts.
2. Misuse of public funds for personal expenses.
3. Self-dealing with related companies.
4. Weak board governance.
5. Inadequate state oversight.
6. Excessive management fees paid to private operators.
7. Poor financial transparency.

Important Context

It is equally important to note that:

- Thousands of charter schools operate without major fraud allegations.
- Traditional public schools have also experienced instances of embezzlement and financial misconduct.

- The policy question is not whether fraud exists only in charter schools—it does not.
- The policy question is whether publicly funded schools of all types should be subject to comparable transparency, auditing, public records, conflict-of-interest, and accountability requirements.

Why Have People Historically Quit Their Jobs?

By Marcel Schwantes on the nINC site.



While employees often cite pay, workload, benefits, or career opportunities as reasons for leaving, the underlying issue is usually much simpler: **people leave when they do not feel valued and appreciated.** The article explores how leadership behaviors influence employee engagement, loyalty, and retention.

1. People Rarely Leave Because of Money Alone

Although compensation matters, research consistently shows that employees often leave organizations because of poor leadership, lack of recognition, and unhealthy workplace relationships. People want to feel that their contributions matter.

2. The Four Words Are: "I Appreciate Your Efforts."

According to Schwantes, one of the most powerful retention tools available to leaders is genuine appreciation. Employees who feel noticed and valued are more likely to remain committed to their organization.

3. Recognition Is a Basic Human Need

People want to know that their work has meaning and that their efforts make a difference. Recognition fulfills an important psychological need for belonging, contribution, and significance.

4. Appreciation Builds Trust

When leaders consistently acknowledge employee contributions, they strengthen trust and create stronger workplace relationships. Employees are more willing to go the extra mile for leaders who demonstrate authentic gratitude.

5. Small Gestures Often Have Large Impacts

Appreciation does not require elaborate recognition programs. A sincere thank-you, a personal note, or public acknowledgment can significantly improve morale and engagement.

6. Culture Is Shaped by Daily Interactions

Workplace culture is not primarily created through mission statements or strategic plans. It is built through countless daily interactions between leaders and employees. Expressions of appreciation help create a positive and supportive culture.

7. Appreciated Employees Are More Likely to Stay

Organizations that foster a culture of gratitude typically experience higher retention, stronger teamwork, greater job satisfaction, and improved performance. Employees stay where they feel respected and valued.

Key Lessons for School Leaders

1. Teachers Want More Than a Paycheck

Most educators enter the profession because they want to make a difference. Recognition reinforces that sense of purpose.

2. Appreciation Improves Retention

At a time of teacher shortages, sincere recognition can help reduce turnover and strengthen morale.

3. Visibility Matters

Teachers, support staff, custodians, bus drivers, and office personnel all want to know their work is noticed and appreciated.

4. Leadership Is Relational

Employees are more likely to remain committed to leaders who build positive relationships and express gratitude regularly.

5. Small Actions Create Big Results

A handwritten note, a personal conversation, or public recognition at a staff meeting can have a lasting impact.

Reflection Question

Think about the best supervisor or leader you ever worked for. How did they make you feel appreciated?

Memorable Takeaway

"People may join organizations for opportunity, but they often stay because they feel valued."

For school leaders facing staffing challenges, this article serves as a reminder that one of the most powerful leadership tools costs nothing: genuine appreciation.

Spotlight Conversations

The Interview with Superintendent

Dr. Louis Wool by James Minichello

‘We Are Public School Advocates’: Spotlight Conversations with Louis Wool

Spotlight Conversations is a Q&A series produced by the Horace Mann League that highlights leaders 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 Louis Wool, superintendent of New York’s **Harrison Central School District**, a learning community serving more than 3,800 students. Supt. Wool is a member of the Horace Mann League’s Board of Directors.

HML: Superintendent Wool, thank you so much for participating in this interview. First, let's talk about the impact the Harrison Central School District has on its community.

LW: I spent 18 years in an urban district where 85% of the students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch, and the student population was predominantly African American. That district is about 15 minutes from where I'm sitting right now. I watched kids deliberately disenfranchised from opportunity. I was the director of a magnet school program whose theory was that if you could improve the quality of the curriculum, you could convince White people to come to school with Black kids. I did my research on that and found it was inherently wrong. It rarely worked.

I spent all my time there improving the curriculum and elevating the professional development of that faculty. Even though we didn't get White folks to come to school with Black kids, the quality of education and the outcomes for those kids improved.

Fast-forward, and I arrive in Harrison, where resources are more abundant, and the population is more economically diverse. We appear to be a wealthy district, but the reality is more complex. My high school is currently about 25% free and reduced-price lunch. I have one elementary school where more than 30% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch, and another where less than 1% do. But I have always believed that public education should elevate all kids, which aligns with Horace Mann's vision.

I hope the impact and outcomes I'm having on the Harrison community are reaching the broader education community. Here, there are no prerequisites for participation in any program. Regarding the International Baccalaureate program, 100% of my high school students participate. We have removed all the structural barriers to participation. I don't believe in virtue signaling. I believe in virtuous work; those are two very different things.

About 14 years ago, the district decided to pay for everyone's exam fees. We removed that final barrier. Today, both the International Baccalaureate Organization and *U.S. News & World Report* rank our high school among the top 2% worldwide for academic performance. I'm proud of the academic outcome, but even more proud of the message it sends—that you can build a system that is authentically inclusive, with no prerequisites for participation, and still be high-performing. My goal in staying here for more than 1/4 century, 24 years as superintendent, is to prove that when you lead with the nonnegotiable value that every child has inherent worth, when you invest in professional development, remove structural barriers, and provide actual opportunities for kids, public schools can fulfill their ultimate mission: elevating every student into a vibrant democracy.

HML: What PD programs are gaining traction among staff?

LW: I was an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction before I became a superintendent. Too often, professional development becomes the

‘flavor of the month.’ Or you encourage teachers to earn graduate credits simply to move up the salary schedule. You don’t have a unified approach to teaching and learning and the professional development that supports it. People are often not engaged in a systemic approach to teaching and learning. I changed that model in 2003. It was probably one of the most strategic shifts I ever got union leadership to partner with me on. Teachers no longer have to go out shopping for graduate credits to earn salary increases.

We offer free in-house professional development aligned with the district’s areas of focus, and if you complete it, you will advance on the salary schedule at no cost. We became a full International Baccalaureate district just this year. All four of my elementary schools entered the program together; IB told us we couldn’t do that, and we reminded them that in our district, everybody moves or nobody moves.

We prioritize certain initiatives in the system, but we do so systematically. For example, each year we run professional development sessions to enhance co-teaching partnerships. It’s a clear example of being fully committed to structural reforms that are meaningful for kids. It’s one thing to have co-teaching; it’s another thing to support it. If a co-teaching pair is teaching together for the first time, you are provided a course where you learn and prepare together. You’re paid for that. What distinguishes our approach is its unified, systemic nature. It always comes back to our core belief that if you believe that everyone should be included, then you have to demonstrate it structurally and in principle.

HML: Given the teaching and learning excellence underway in the school buildings at Harrison Central School District, talk about the positive school culture that’s going on within the hallways, the classrooms, the playgrounds, and the gymnasiums.

LW: That is a profound and important question because many throw around a lot of acronyms, SEL, DEI, and inclusivity. We have never jumped on a particular bandwagon. Instead, we do virtuous work. So, if you were going to examine my district to determine whether we’re meeting the needs of all kids, the first thing I would tell you to examine is our structures: There’s nothing that prevents any child from participating. But on the culture side, the reason I selected IB back in 1999, when I was assistant superintendent, was that it offered a broader vision of community than I was seeing in most educational models.

In a community like mine, it is mistakenly seen as homogeneous, but it is extremely economically diverse. Over the years, it has also become much more ethnically diverse. The IB approach, simply put, is to teach students how to think, not what to think. Understanding and valuing another person’s perspective is not an occasional lesson—it is embedded throughout the curriculum. Over time, those principles become the culture itself.

We have four core values: equity, meaning everyone gets what they need; access, meaning no one is denied opportunity because of a lack of resources; and rigor, which looks different for every student. In the fourth, adaptability underlies them all—the belief that the system must adapt to the people within it. If you don’t feel comfortable, it’s the system’s responsibility to adapt to you.

There are three theories of action to drive our leadership, which were selected and honed over many years, and seamlessly weave into our approach to guiding. The first is transformational leadership. If you don't treat everybody in this organization as having inherent worth, you can't work here. If I see any difference between how you treat me and how you treat the head custodian, you will not be here.

The message is that everyone has inherent worth. The second theory is distributed leadership, the belief that nobody can do this on their own. Everybody has a responsibility for everything. We were the first district in the country to equip all cell phones with panic buttons for everyone who works here, including school aides and school monitors. Anyone in this district can lock down the school by opening their phone and pressing a button. The message is that everybody matters.

The third, which is the hardest to live by—and the one that makes people most uncomfortable—is adaptive leadership theory. The belief that you can simply tell people what to do and expect lasting change is a misconception. You have to bring people along by changing hearts and minds.

The next time you're waiting in line at Starbucks and see a barista who's overwhelmed, simply saying, 'I appreciate your efforts,' can completely change the moment. Those small exchanges define who we are not only as educators but also as leaders.

HML: What is a particular challenge the school district is addressing?

LW: I'm going to echo what you said earlier, 'What is the impact on the community?' As a veteran superintendent, I'm in my fourth term as president of the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents, which comprises four counties and about 78 superintendents. I believe the superintendency has become even more complicated than it was in the past. I feel that the existential threats facing public education must be addressed regionally. The risk I face every day, even though I'm in a high-resource district, is that my mission is highly controversial because it pushes back against people who think that, in order to be high-performing, excluding some kids is a good idea. My belief is that anything that diverts public funds from public education is an existential threat. I'm working both regionally and at the state level to ensure public dollars are not consistently siphoned away from public schools. Even though it wouldn't necessarily devastate me, anything that diminishes the public schools around me, and there are urban school systems around me that are already being devastated, is bad for public education. Public education is what will ultimately provide us with the kind of vision that America aspires to, and it's all of our work to protect it

What I like to remind my colleagues and my school board is that if you saw a child on the side of the road in trouble, you'd get out to help them. We are not public schools of Harrison. We are public school advocates. And if we don't see that connection, this 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.

HML: With the academic school year ending, what are you most proud of?

LW: It took me almost 20 years to make my system a full International Baccalaureate system. As you well know, you can't just make these maneuvers; you have to prepare the system, and we did so meticulously. I was very proud of the organization pushing back on IB, which said you can't bring in four schools at the same time. It's never been done. And I was insistent that we wouldn't have a curriculum at one of my schools that I couldn't have at the other 4, so we completed that task.

Here is the other thing I'm proud of. Nationally, there is a trend of declining birth rates, and it's the same internationally. Across New York State, most school districts are seeing declining enrollment, and my school system is growing rapidly. We added more than 250 students over a two-year period. People are relocating from other parts of the country, specifically to join this school community. I think what makes me proudest is talking to those people. Many of them are educators who have figured out what we're doing. The more people who understand the significance of what we've achieved, the more likely we are to sustain it. I'm proud of that.

I've had four retirements this year, and all of them have been filled internally. Because I've been working with Bank Street College for 18 years, every 2 years I select 5 or 6 teachers to join the Bank Street Future School Leaders Academy and mentor them myself throughout that 2-year period. When we're looking for candidates, they're not only internal but also well-versed in our approach to leading and teaching.

HML: What does it mean to you to be part of the leadership of the Horace Mann League?

LW: I've been a member of the Horace Mann League since 2002. I was invited by a respected colleague. The League's message is more important than ever. It is everybody's job to protect public schools. Public education is part of a thriving democracy and helps prepare young people to participate in it. But it can't be limited to some young people—it must include all young people.

HML: Any final comments before we say “good-bye?”

LW: I spend a lot of time mentoring young superintendents. For new administrators, I run a principal study group. They always ask me why I've stayed at it so long and what they need to be aware of. Here's what I tell them: I am completely devoted to what I do. It is my life. If you're a young administrator reading this, be focused and zealous, but also mindful that you need to tend to both parts of your life.

HML: Louis, thank you for sharing your insights and for your leadership. We appreciate your ongoing contributions to the Horace Mann League.

How School Leaders Can Improve Civic Engagement in Their Communities. Edited by Jack McKay



For communities like yours and thousands of similar towns across America, these studies suggest that school leaders can strengthen civic engagement by building partnerships, fostering service-learning, creating opportunities for student voice, and positioning schools as centers of community life.

Public schools play a critical role in sustaining democracy. Research consistently shows that when schools intentionally connect students, families, and community organizations to civic life, communities become stronger, more trusting, and more engaged. Here are five significant research-based articles that offer practical lessons for school leaders.

1. Creating Partnerships for Effective Youth Civic Learning. Source: National Civic League

Seven-Point Summary

1. Civic learning is most effective when schools partner with community organizations.
2. Students learn civic responsibility through real-world experiences.
3. Community-based civic learning improves school climate.
4. Students involved in civic projects demonstrate higher engagement and attendance.
5. Civic participation strengthens relationships between students, teachers, and community members.
6. Service-learning helps students connect academic content with community issues.
7. Partnerships create opportunities for students to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Implications for School Leaders

- Develop partnerships with local government, nonprofits, and civic groups.
- Create student service-learning opportunities.
- Encourage participation in community problem-solving efforts.

2. Family and Community Engagement: Lead Relationship Builders.

Source: New Leaders

Seven-Point Summary

1. Effective school leaders are skilled relationship builders.
2. Strong schools develop authentic partnerships with families.
3. Trust is the foundation of community engagement.
4. Community involvement increases support for schools.
5. Successful leaders actively seek stakeholder input.
6. Schools become stronger when families feel valued and respected.
7. Community engagement requires intentional leadership practices.

Implications for School Leaders

- Hold regular community listening sessions.
- Increase opportunities for parent participation.
- Build relationships before problems arise.

3. Community Partnerships. Source: Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

Seven-Point Summary

1. Community partnerships improve academic achievement.
2. Partnerships positively affect attendance and motivation.
3. Social-emotional development improves through community engagement.
4. Schools can address student needs more effectively through partnerships.
5. Communities possess assets that schools can leverage.
6. Shared responsibility strengthens outcomes for students.
7. Successful partnerships are reciprocal and mutually beneficial.

Implications for School Leaders

- Map community assets and resources.
- Collaborate with local businesses and agencies.
- View schools as community hubs rather than isolated institutions.

4. Leadership and Family-School-Community Partnerships. Source:

National Center for Biotechnology Information (2025)

Seven-Point Summary

1. Leadership is essential for sustaining community partnerships.
2. Equity-focused schools actively engage families and community organizations.
3. Collaborative leadership strengthens community trust.
4. Shared decision-making increases stakeholder commitment.
5. Schools benefit when community voices are included.
6. Partnerships help address student and family needs.
7. Leadership practices influence the quality of community engagement.

Implications for School Leaders

- Include community representatives in advisory groups.
- Build structures for ongoing collaboration.
- Focus on equity and inclusion when designing engagement strategies.

5. Promoting Civic Education and Engagement Through Community

Partnerships. source: Journal of Public Affairs Education

Seven-Point Summary

1. Civic engagement develops through authentic experiences.
2. Partnerships expose students to public service careers.
3. Students become more interested in civic participation when they meet community leaders.
4. Community partnerships connect classroom learning with civic responsibility.
5. Youth leadership opportunities increase civic awareness.
6. Collaboration between schools and community organizations expands opportunities.
7. Civic engagement is strengthened when students see themselves as contributors to their communities.

Implications for School Leaders

- Organize youth civic summits.
- Invite public officials and community leaders into schools.
- Create leadership opportunities for students.

Five Major Lessons for School Leaders

1. Relationships Come First

Strong civic engagement begins with trust among schools, families, and community organizations.

2. Students Learn Citizenship by Practicing It

Service-learning, community projects, and civic experiences are more powerful than classroom instruction alone.

3. Schools Should Serve as Community Hubs

The most successful schools act as conveners of community resources and partnerships.

4. Shared Leadership Builds Community Ownership

When families and community members participate in decision-making, support for schools increases.

5. Civic Engagement Strengthens Democracy

Public schools are uniquely positioned to prepare students not only for careers and college, but also for active citizenship.

Quote

"Democracy is not learned solely from textbooks; it is learned when students, families, schools, and communities work together to solve real problems and improve the common good."

The Ten Most Important Strategies of Successful Negotiators. Edited by Jack McKay

Whether in education, community leadership, or personal relationships, the best negotiators share several common habits.



1. Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Most people negotiate positions ("I want a 10% raise"). Great negotiators explore interests ("I want recognition, growth, and financial security").

Question: What is the other side really trying to achieve?

2. Listen More Than You Talk

The best negotiators spend more time asking questions than making arguments.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

Information is power.

3. Prepare Thoroughly

Successful negotiators rarely improvise.

Before entering a negotiation, know:

- Your objectives
- Your alternatives
- Your limits
- The other party's likely interests

Preparation often determines the outcome before the meeting begins.

4. Build Relationships Before Seeking Agreement

People are more likely to work with someone they trust.

Successful negotiators:

- Show respect
- Find common ground
- Establish credibility
- Build rapport

Trust reduces resistance.

5. Control Your Emotions

Emotional reactions weaken negotiating power.

The best negotiators:

- Stay calm
- Avoid personal attacks
- Remain patient
- Think before responding

"He who angers you conquers you."

6. Be Comfortable With Silence

Silence is one of the most underused negotiation tools.

After making a proposal:

- Stop talking
- Let the other person think
- Allow them to respond

Many people negotiate against themselves because they cannot tolerate silence.

7. Know Your BATNA

(Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement)

If the negotiation fails:

- What will you do?

The stronger your alternative, the stronger your negotiating position.

Never enter a negotiation without knowing your BATNA.

8. Look for Win-Win Solutions

The most durable agreements create value for both parties.

Ask:

- How can both sides benefit?
- What matters most to them?
- What matters most to us?

The best negotiators solve problems rather than defeat opponents.

9. Never Negotiate Against Yourself

After making a reasonable proposal:

- Don't immediately lower your offer.
- Don't assume rejection.
- Don't fill every silence.

Wait for the other party to respond.

10. Be Patient

Many negotiations are won by patience rather than pressure.

Successful negotiators understand:

- Good decisions take time.
- Relationships matter.
- Rushed agreements often fail.

Patience often creates leverage.

Five Negotiation Questions Great Negotiators Ask

1. What would a successful outcome look like for you?
2. What concerns you most about this proposal?
3. What options have we not considered?
4. What would need to happen for you to feel comfortable moving forward?
5. Where do you think we already agree?

Wisdom

"The goal of negotiation is not to win an argument; it is to solve a problem."

And perhaps the most important lesson:

"People may forget what you proposed, but they rarely forget how you treated them during the negotiation."

For school leaders, board members, and community leaders, the strongest negotiators are often not the toughest people in the room—they are the most prepared, the best listeners, and the most trusted.

Your Birth Order Affects Your Future, but Not for the Reason You Think

by Michael J. Coren on the Washington Post site.

Emerging research on birth order challenges many long-held assumptions. While popular culture often claims that firstborns become leaders, middle children become peacemakers, and youngest children become risk-takers, research suggests that the effects of birth order are more subtle and driven largely by family resources and parental attention rather than by personality traits alone.

1. Birth Order Does Influence Life Outcomes

Research continues to find measurable differences among firstborns, middle children, and later-born siblings. These differences can affect educational attainment, career success, and income levels.

2. The Traditional Personality Theory Is Weak

Many studies have failed to find strong evidence that birth order consistently shapes personality traits such as extroversion, leadership, or creativity. The popular stereotypes are often exaggerated.

3. Family Resources Matter More Than Personality

The strongest birth-order effects appear to stem from how parents allocate time, attention, and resources. Firstborn children often receive more one-on-one interaction during their early years.

4. Firstborns Often Receive a Developmental Advantage

Because parents initially focus all their attention on one child, firstborns may experience advantages in language development, academic support, and cognitive stimulation.

5. Later-Born Children Face Different Circumstances

As families grow, parental time and resources must be shared among more children. This does not necessarily harm younger siblings, but it can create different developmental experiences.

6. Family Size Matters

Researchers found that some birth-order effects are actually family-size effects. Children from larger families often have different educational and economic outcomes than those from smaller families.

7. Policy Implications Extend Beyond Families

The findings suggest that access to early childhood education, tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment opportunities can help offset differences that emerge from variations in family resources.

8. What Parents Do Matters More Than Birth Order Itself

The article concludes that birth order is not destiny. Parenting practices, educational opportunities, family culture, and social supports have a much greater influence on long-term success than sibling position alone.



For Parents

1. Avoid Birth-Order Labels

Children should not be defined by stereotypes such as "the responsible firstborn" or "the carefree youngest."

2. Be Intentional About Individual Attention

Each child benefits from dedicated time with parents.

3. Recognize Different Needs

Children may require different kinds of support at different stages of development.

4. Focus on Opportunity

Providing learning experiences, encouragement, and support matters more than birth order.

For Educators

1. Students Arrive with Different Family Experiences

Teachers should recognize that academic readiness may reflect differences in opportunity rather than ability.

2. Early Intervention Matters

Additional support can help close developmental gaps before they widen.

3. Relationships Remain Critical

Mentors, teachers, and coaches can provide forms of attention and encouragement that some students may receive less frequently at home.

4. Equity Is About Opportunity

Schools play an important role in ensuring that students have access to learning experiences regardless of family circumstances.

Question

Think about your own family. How much of who you became was influenced by birth order, and how much was influenced by opportunities, relationships, and experiences?

Birth order may influence the starting conditions of life, but it is the quality of relationships, opportunities, and support systems that most strongly shape a person's future.

Issues of the Week

A Potential Leadership Resource: Dealing with Polarization

Public education has always existed within a political environment, but today's climate presents unique challenges. School leaders increasingly find themselves navigating community divisions over curriculum, library materials, student rights, AI, religion, school choice, public health, and the very purpose of public education.

The leader's role has become less about managing schools and more about managing trust. This guide outlines key competencies school leaders need to lead effectively in an era of polarization.



Part I: What School Leaders Need

1. Conflict Management Skills

Core Principle

Not every disagreement is a problem.

Healthy democracies depend on disagreement. The challenge is preventing disagreement from becoming dysfunction.

Leadership Practices

- Focus on interests rather than positions.
- Separate people from problems.
- Establish norms for difficult conversations.
- Create structured opportunities for dialogue.
- Avoid becoming personally defensive.
- Look for common values beneath competing viewpoints.

Questions Leaders Should Ask

- What are people really concerned about?
- What values are driving their position?
- What would success look like for all parties?

2. Community Trust-Building Strategies

Core Principle

Trust is a district's most valuable asset.

Research consistently shows that communities support leaders they trust—even when they disagree with specific decisions.

Trust-Building Practices

Be Visible

- Attend community events.
- Visit local civic organizations.
- Meet with parent groups.

Be Accessible

- Hold listening sessions.
- Respond promptly to concerns.
- Maintain open communication channels.

Be Predictable

- Apply policies consistently.
- Explain decisions clearly.
- Avoid surprises whenever possible.

Be Transparent

- Share data openly.
- Explain reasoning.
- Admit mistakes when they occur.

3. Board Relations Guidance

Core Principle

Board-superintendent relationships determine organizational stability.

In polarized environments, board unity becomes even more important.

Effective Practices

Clarify Roles

Boards govern.

Superintendents administer.

Confusion creates conflict.

Build Individual Relationships

Meet regularly with board members.

Listen carefully.

Understand priorities.

Avoid Surprises

No board member should learn major news from social media.

Focus on Shared Goals

Return discussions to:

- Student success
- Community values
- District mission

Maintain Political Neutrality

Serve all board members regardless of ideology.

4. Communication Tools

Core Principle

Silence creates a vacuum.

In the absence of information, misinformation fills the gap.

Communication Strategies

Lead With Values

Before discussing policies, discuss principles.

Example:

"We believe every child deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported."

Use Plain Language

Avoid educational jargon.

Speak in ways community members understand.

Acknowledge Concerns

People want to be heard before they are persuaded.

Tell Stories

Data informs.

Stories connect.

Repeat Key Messages

Research suggests people need repeated exposure before messages stick.

Part II: Practical Strategies During Community Conflict

When Controversy Emerges

Don't

- React emotionally.
- Attack critics.
- Rush to social media.
- Personalize disagreements.

Do

- Gather facts.
- Slow the process.
- Communicate regularly.
- Reinforce district values.

- Focus on students.

When Meetings Become Contentious

Leaders Should

- Remain calm.
- Respect all speakers.
- Enforce procedures consistently.
- Focus discussions on issues rather than personalities.
- Thank participants for civic engagement.

When Misinformation Spreads

Best Practices

- Respond quickly.
- Use facts.
- Avoid ridicule.
- Correct misinformation respectfully.
- Communicate through multiple channels.

Part III: Leadership Characteristics That Matter Most

Research suggests successful superintendents increasingly demonstrate:

Courage: Willingness to make difficult decisions.

Humility: Recognition that no leader has all the answers.

Empathy: Ability to understand competing perspectives.

Consistency: Predictable behavior builds trust.

Resilience: Capacity to withstand criticism without becoming defensive.

Civility: Modeling democratic behavior.

Hope: Helping communities see a positive future.

That is leadership in an era of polarization. It is also the work of hope.

Polarization Is Not Our Destiny: Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

Like many communities across America, ours is experiencing increased polarization.

Conversations that once centered on solving problems sometimes become debates about who is right, who is wrong, and who belongs on one side or the other.

While disagreement is a natural part of democracy, division is not.

One of the great strengths of our community has always been our ability to work together despite differences. We may vote differently, worship differently, come from different backgrounds, or hold different views on public issues. Yet we share something more important: a commitment to the well-being of our neighbors and to the future of our community.



Public schools provide one of the few places where people from all walks of life come together around a common purpose. Every day, students learn alongside classmates whose experiences and perspectives differ from their own. In the process, they learn an important lesson about citizenship: disagreement does not require disrespect.

The challenges facing our community are real. Economic uncertainty, rapid technological change, political conflict, and social media have all contributed to an environment where it is easier to criticize than to collaborate. Yet history reminds us that communities thrive not when everyone agrees, but when people remain committed to listening, learning, and working together.

The question before us is not whether we will disagree. We will. The question is whether we can disagree constructively while preserving the relationships and institutions that bind us together.

Civility is not weakness. Listening is not surrender. Compromise is not defeat. These are the habits that sustain both communities and democracies.

As citizens, parents, educators, business leaders, and public servants, we should model for the next generation the kind of respectful engagement we hope to see in them. We can begin by assuming good intentions, seeking understanding before judgment, and remembering that our neighbors are not our opponents. Polarization may be a national trend, but it does not have to define our local future.

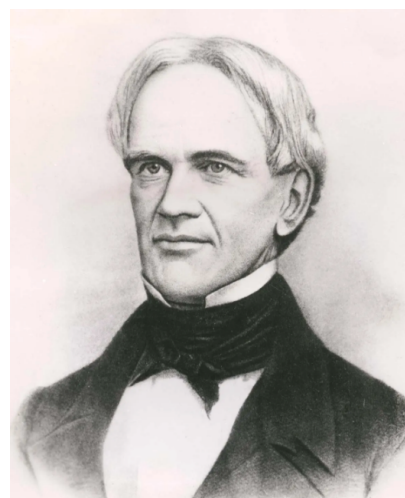
The strength of our community will not be measured by how often we agree, but by how well we work together when we do not.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Community]

What Would Horace Mann Do During These Times of Community Polarization? Edited by Jack McKay

It seems that everything you do will cause unrest.

This is a fascinating question because Horace Mann led during a period of profound division in American society. The 1830s and 1840s were marked by intense conflicts over religion, immigration, social class, political power, and eventually slavery. In many ways, Mann faced challenges similar to those confronting school leaders today.



I believe Horace Mann would offer several lessons.

1. He Would Not Retreat from Public Education's Democratic Purpose

Mann believed public schools existed for more than academic instruction.

He wrote that public education was:

"The great equalizer of the conditions of men."

He would likely argue that when communities become polarized, public schools become more important, not less.

His position would probably be:

"The answer to division is not abandoning public education but strengthening it."

2. He Would Listen Before He Led

Mann spent much of his career traveling throughout Massachusetts, visiting communities, speaking with citizens, and listening to concerns.

He understood that people support institutions they trust.

Before proposing solutions, he would likely ask:

- What are people worried about?
- What values are they trying to protect?
- What fears are driving this conflict?

3. He Would Focus on Common Ground

Mann consistently sought principles that could unite diverse groups.

Today he might ask:

What do parents of every political viewpoint want?

Most would answer:

- Safe schools
- Good teachers
- Academic success
- Opportunity for children
- Preparation for citizenship

Mann would likely encourage leaders to begin conversations there.

4. He Would Defend Public Education Without Demonizing Opponents

Mann was a passionate advocate, but he generally focused on promoting the value of public schools rather than attacking those who disagreed with him.

He might advise:

"Defend the institution without attacking the individual."

In polarized environments, that distinction matters.

5. He Would Insist That Schools Teach Citizenship

Mann believed democracy depends on educated citizens.

If he were alive today, he would likely be concerned about:

- Civic ignorance
- Social media misinformation
- Declining trust
- Political tribalism

His response would not be partisan.

His response would be:

"Teach students how democracy works and how citizens engage respectfully with one another."

6. He Would Encourage Leaders to Stay Calm

One lesson from The Common School Journal is Mann's belief that leaders must remain steady during controversy.

When criticism arose, he rarely responded emotionally.

Today's translation:

- Don't overreact.
- Don't personalize attacks.
- Stay focused on the mission.
- Play the long game.

7. He Would Distinguish Between Popularity and Leadership

Mann often advanced controversial ideas.

Many communities resisted:

- Public funding of schools
- Professional teacher preparation
- State oversight
- Universal education

Yet he continued.

He might remind leaders:

"Leadership is not the art of avoiding criticism. It is the art of serving the public good despite criticism."

8. He Would Protect the School as a Common Ground Institution

Perhaps most importantly, Mann believed public schools were among the few institutions where people from different backgrounds could come together.

Today, he might ask:

Where else in the community do:

- Rich and poor
- Conservative and liberal
- Native-born and immigrant
- Different faith traditions

regularly interact?

His answer would likely be:

"Public schools remain one of democracy's last gathering places."

What Horace Mann Might Say to Superintendents Today

If Horace Mann were speaking to a superintendent facing angry board meetings, social media criticism, and community division, I suspect his advice might sound something like this:

"Remember why public schools exist. They do not exist to satisfy every faction. They exist to educate every child. Listen carefully, treat every citizen with respect, seek common ground whenever possible, and remain faithful to the larger purpose of public education. Temporary controversies will pass. The work of preparing the next generation for citizenship will remain."

A Horace Mann League Reflection

For the Horace Mann League, the challenge is not merely defending public schools.

The challenge is helping communities remember that public schools are one of the few institutions specifically designed to bring people together around a shared future.

In times of polarization, Horace Mann would likely urge us to focus less on winning arguments and more on preserving the civic fabric that makes democratic self-government possible.

"Public education is not simply a service we provide. It is one of the ways a democracy learns how to live with its differences."

The Strangest Secret (Often Called The Secret of Success)

by Earl Nightingale

Originally recorded in 1956, The Strangest Secret became one of the most influential personal development programs ever produced. Earl Nightingale's central message is simple yet profound:



"We become what we think about."

1. You Become What You Think About

Nightingale argues that a person's dominant thoughts largely determine the direction of their life. People who focus on worthwhile goals tend to move toward them, while those who dwell on fear, failure, or negativity often create those outcomes.

2. Success Begins with a Definite Purpose

Most people drift through life without clear goals. Successful people, by contrast, know what they want and consciously direct their efforts toward achieving it.

3. Most People Do Not Have Clear Goals

Nightingale observed that only a small percentage of people have written goals and a clear vision for their future. This lack of direction explains why many people never achieve their potential.

4. Attitude Determines Results

A positive mental attitude does not guarantee success, but a negative attitude almost guarantees disappointment. Optimism, confidence, and persistence help people overcome obstacles.

5. Success Is Progressive Realization of a Worthy Goal

Nightingale defines success not as wealth or status, but as continually moving toward a meaningful objective. A person making progress toward a worthwhile goal is already successful.

6. Thoughts Influence Actions

Our thoughts shape our decisions, behaviors, and habits. What we consistently think about influences the choices we make every day.

7. Fear Is One of the Greatest Obstacles

Many people fail to pursue their goals because they fear failure, criticism, rejection, or uncertainty. Nightingale encourages listeners to act despite their fears.

8. Service to Others Creates Opportunity

Success often comes from helping others solve problems, meet needs, or improve their lives. The more value we provide, the greater our opportunities for growth and success.

9. Persistence Separates Successful People from Others

Most worthwhile goals require time and sustained effort. Those who persevere through setbacks and difficulties are more likely to achieve lasting success.

10. Control Your Mind or It Will Control You

Nightingale compares the mind to fertile soil—it will grow whatever is planted in it. Therefore, individuals must consciously choose thoughts that support their goals and values.

Quotes

1. "We become what we think about."
2. "People with goals succeed because they know where they are going."
3. "Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal."
4. "You are now, and you do become, what you think about."
5. "Your rewards in life are determined by the service you render."

Leadership Applications

For leaders:

1. Create a clear vision for yourself and your organization.
2. Focus attention on opportunities rather than obstacles.
3. Communicate goals consistently.
4. Encourage a growth-oriented mindset.
5. Build a culture centered on purpose and service.
6. Help others see possibilities they may not yet see.
7. Model optimism, persistence, and intentional thinking.

Questions

1. What occupies most of your thinking each day?
2. Do you have clearly defined goals?
3. Are your thoughts helping or hindering your progress?
4. What worthwhile goal are you currently pursuing?
5. If your future reflects your current thinking, what might it look like?

Success begins in the mind. By developing a clear purpose, maintaining constructive thoughts, serving others, and persisting toward worthwhile goals, individuals can shape the direction of their lives and become the person they aspire to be.

Predictable Struggles That Thwart Education Leadership Teams: There Are Ways to Avoid Those Failures by Peter DeWitt & Michael Nelson on the Ed. Week site.



Peter DeWitt and Michael Nelson argue that many school leadership teams fail not for lack of talent or commitment, but because they fall into three common, predictable traps. Drawing on leadership research and practical experience, the authors emphasize that effective **leadership teams require intentional effort, trust, and a shared commitment to improvement.**

1. Leadership Teams Often Lack Genuine Trust

The foundation of any effective leadership team is trust. When team members are unwilling to be vulnerable, admit mistakes, ask for help, or engage in honest dialogue, the team's effectiveness suffers. Without trust, meetings become superficial and important issues remain unaddressed.

2. Avoiding Conflict Leads to Poor Decisions

Many leadership teams confuse harmony with effectiveness. The authors argue that productive conflict is essential. When team members avoid disagreement, alternative viewpoints are never explored, and decisions may be based on incomplete information.

3. Lack of Clarity Around Purpose and Priorities Creates Drift

Leadership teams often become consumed by daily operational issues. Without a clear focus on shared goals, strategic priorities, and student learning, teams can lose direction and spend excessive time reacting rather than leading.

4. Healthy Teams Engage in Candid Conversations

Effective leadership teams create environments where difficult conversations can occur respectfully. Team members feel safe challenging ideas while maintaining strong professional relationships.

5. Shared Accountability Strengthens Team Performance

High-performing teams hold one another accountable for commitments and results. Accountability is viewed as support for improvement rather than punishment or criticism.

6. Leadership Teams Must Model the Culture They Seek

The behavior of the leadership team influences the entire organization. If leaders collaborate, communicate openly, and focus on learning, those behaviors are more likely to spread throughout the district or school.

7. Continuous Reflection Is Essential

Strong leadership teams regularly assess how they are functioning. They ask whether meetings are productive, priorities are clear, communication is effective, and relationships are strong enough to support difficult work.

The Three Predictable Struggles

1. Lack of Trust

Symptoms:

- Hesitation to speak openly
- Reluctance to admit mistakes
- Limited vulnerability
- Surface-level discussions

Leadership Response:

- Encourage openness and honesty.
- Model vulnerability as a leader.
- Create opportunities for relationship building.

2. Fear of Conflict

Symptoms:

- Artificial agreement
- Unspoken disagreements
- Passive resistance
- Poor decision-making

Leadership Response:

- Normalize respectful disagreement.
- Focus on issues rather than personalities.
- Encourage diverse viewpoints.

3. Lack of Focus and Accountability

Symptoms:

- Too many priorities
- Constant reaction to crises
- Unclear expectations
- Little follow-through

Leadership Response:

- Establish a small number of strategic goals.
- Clarify responsibilities.
- Monitor progress regularly.

Implications for Leaders

1. Invest in Team Development

A talented leadership team does not automatically become an effective leadership team.

2. Prioritize Trust-Building

Trust is not a soft skill—it is a strategic asset.

3. Encourage Productive Conflict

Healthy disagreement often leads to better decisions.

4. Clarify District Priorities

Teams perform better when they understand what matters most.

5. Hold One Another Accountable

Accountability should be viewed as a commitment to excellence rather than criticism.

Connection to Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team

The article strongly reflects themes found in Patrick Lencioni's model:

Dysfunction - Connection

Absence of Trust. - Teams lack vulnerability and openness

Fear of Conflict. - Teams avoid difficult conversations

Lack of Commitment. - Priorities become unclear

Avoidance of Accountability. - Follow-through suffers

Inattention to Results. - Focus drifts from student outcomes

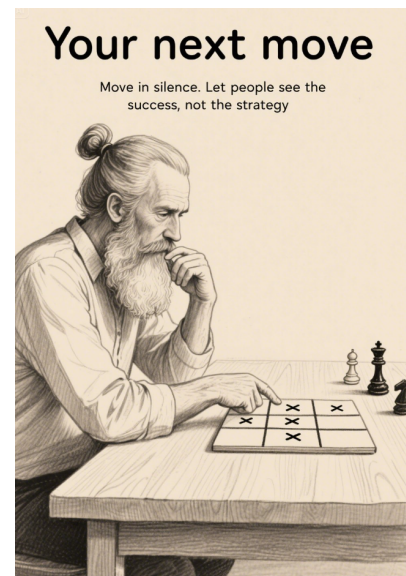
Reflection Questions for Leadership Teams

1. Do team members feel safe expressing dissenting opinions?
2. Are difficult issues discussed openly or avoided?
3. What are our three most important priorities?
4. How do we hold one another accountable?
5. What behaviors are we modeling for principals, teachers, and staff?

The effectiveness of a school district is often limited not by the quality of its individual leaders but by the quality of the leadership team's relationships, trust, and collective focus.

Laws of Leadership and Life

- 1. The Visibility Law:** The less important a decision is, the more time people will spend debating it.
- 2. The Meeting Law:** If a meeting has no agenda, it will last twice as long and accomplish half as much.
- 3. The Reform Law:** Every reform creates a new problem that requires another reform.
- 4. The Expertise Law:** The person who knows the most about a problem is rarely the person who gets to decide how it will be solved.
- 5. The Incentive Law:** People will always optimize for what is rewarded, even when it undermines the mission.
- 6. The Accountability Law:** Responsibility moves upward, while blame flows sideways.
- 7. The Technology Law:** Every new tool saves time in theory and costs time in practice—until everyone learns how to misuse it.
- 8. The Bureaucracy Law:** Once a rule is created to solve a problem, the problem disappears—but the rule remains forever.
- 9. The Leadership Law:** Leaders are praised for successes they did not cause and blamed for problems they did not create.
- 10. The Reform Fatigue Law:** The more often people are told change is coming, the less they believe it will matter.



Ten Best Leadership Skills

1. **Self-Awareness**
 - o Understanding your own strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and blind spots.
 - o Enables leaders to accept others' strengths as complements, not threats.
2. **Empathy**
 - o The ability to see situations from others' perspectives.
 - o Builds trust, loyalty, and psychological safety in teams.
3. **Vision & Strategic Thinking**
 - o Inspiring others with a clear direction and purpose.
 - o Ensures daily efforts align with long-term goals.
4. **Communication**
 - o Clear, honest, and transparent communication—both speaking and listening.
 - o Reduces conflict and strengthens collaboration.
5. **Collaboration & Team Building**
 - o Fostering cooperation by leveraging each member's unique strengths.
 - o Encourages a culture of “we,” not “me.”
6. **Adaptability**
 - o Staying flexible in the face of change, uncertainty, or setbacks.
 - o Shows resilience and models calm for the team.
7. **Decision-Making**
 - o Balancing data, intuition, and input from others to make timely, effective choices.
 - o Avoids paralysis by analysis while ensuring inclusion.
8. **Integrity & Accountability**
 - o Leading with honesty, fairness, and consistency.
 - o Holding oneself and others responsible without blame-shifting.
9. **Coaching & Mentoring**
 - o Developing others by providing feedback, encouragement, and opportunities to grow.
 - o Builds the next generation of leaders within the team.
10. **Inspiring Motivation**
 - Recognizing achievements, celebrating progress, and sparking enthusiasm.
 - Motivated teams perform better and are more resilient under pressure.



The best leaders combine **self-awareness, empathy, and integrity** with the ability to **communicate vision, build collaboration, and develop others**. Strong leadership is not about guarding authority, but about empowering people so the whole team thrives.

Great Advice When With Others

1. Never shake hands while sitting.
2. Never speak ill of the food when you are a guest.
3. Don't eat the last piece of something you didn't buy
4. Protect those who are behind you and respect those who are beside you.
5. Never make the first offer in a negotiation.
6. Don't take credit for the work you didn't do.
7. Dress well, no matter what the occasion.
8. Speak honestly — say what you think and mean what you say.
9. Ask more than you answer.
10. Leave the profane language for the less educated.
11. Avoid placing your phone on the table when eating with someone.
12. Listen, smile, and most of all make eye contact.
13. If you're not invited, don't ask to go.
14. Never be ashamed of where you come from.
15. Don't beg for a relationship.



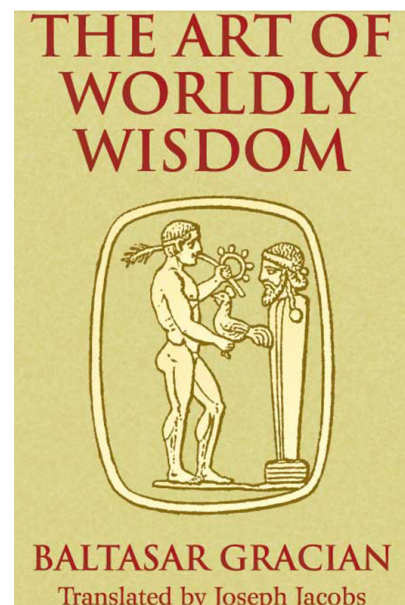
"Character is revealed in the small things: how you treat a host, how you listen to others, how you share credit, and how you carry yourself when no one is keeping score."

Featured Book and Chapter Highlights

Cultivate Those Who Can Teach You

From The Art of Worldly Wisdom by Baltasar Gracián

1. **Seek the company of knowledgeable people.** Gracián advises that wise individuals intentionally surround themselves with people who possess knowledge, experience, and sound judgment. Learning from others accelerates personal growth.
2. **View relationships as opportunities for learning.** Every person has something to teach. The wise person approaches conversations with curiosity rather than assuming they already know enough.
3. **Humility is essential to wisdom.** Those who believe they have nothing left to learn limit their own development. True wisdom begins with recognizing the limits of one's knowledge.



4. **Mentors and teachers expand perspective.** Exposure to thoughtful and accomplished individuals helps us see beyond our own experiences and assumptions. Learning from others can prevent costly mistakes and broaden understanding.
5. **Make lifelong learning a habit.** Gracián encourages continual intellectual growth. Wise people cultivate a network of teachers, advisors, colleagues, and friends who challenge them to think more deeply and act more wisely.

For Leaders

For superintendents, Rotary leaders, and community leaders:

- Seek mentors, even late in your career.
- Build relationships with people who think differently than you do.
- Read widely and engage in thoughtful discussion.
- Join professional networks and learning communities.
- Ask more questions than you answer.

Questions

1. Who are the people currently teaching me?
2. Am I intentionally seeking out wise advisors?
3. When was the last time I changed my mind because I learned something new?
4. Do I spend time with people who challenge my thinking?
5. How am I continuing to grow as a leader?

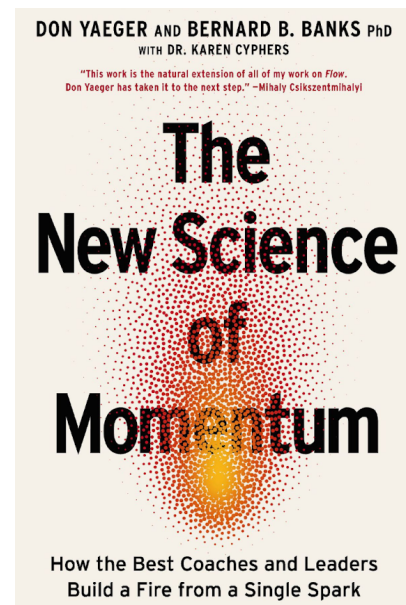
Gracián's message is simple but profound: **wisdom grows through association with wise people.** The most successful leaders never stop learning, and they intentionally cultivate relationships with those who can teach, challenge, and inspire them.

When Mo Is Against You, from The New Science of Momentum by Don Yaeger and Bernie Banks

Yaeger and Banks explore one of leadership's most difficult challenges: what to do when momentum ("Mo") turns negative. Great leaders understand that momentum can work against an organization just as powerfully as it can work in its favor.

1. Negative Momentum Is Real and Powerful

- Just as success can create positive momentum, setbacks can generate a downward spiral.



- Poor performance, low morale, and repeated disappointments can reinforce one another and make recovery increasingly difficult.

2. Leaders Must Recognize Momentum Shifts Early

- Successful leaders identify warning signs before problems become crises.
- Indicators include:
 - Declining morale
 - Increased conflict
 - Reduced trust
 - Falling performance
 - Growing cynicism

3. Denial Makes Things Worse

- One of the greatest leadership mistakes is pretending problems do not exist.
- Effective leaders confront reality honestly and acknowledge challenges without becoming overwhelmed by them.

4. Small Wins Can Reverse the Trend

- The path out of negative momentum rarely begins with a dramatic breakthrough.
- Leaders look for achievable victories that restore confidence and demonstrate progress.
- Small successes create hope and begin rebuilding belief.

5. Belief Is the First Casualty of Negative Momentum

- When momentum turns against a team, people often lose confidence in:
 - The mission
 - Leadership
 - Themselves
- Rebuilding belief becomes a primary leadership responsibility.

6. Communication Becomes More Important Than Ever

- During difficult periods, people look to leaders for direction and reassurance.
- Frequent, honest, and transparent communication helps reduce uncertainty and maintain trust.

7. Culture Is Tested During Adversity

- Anyone can lead when things are going well.
- Difficult periods reveal the true strength of a team's culture, values, and relationships.
- Strong cultures help organizations endure setbacks and stay focused on long-term goals.

8. Resilient Leaders Focus on the Next Positive Step

- Leaders cannot instantly eliminate negative momentum.
- Instead, they focus attention on what can be controlled:
 - Next actions
 - Next decisions
 - Next opportunities for improvement
- Momentum is rebuilt one step at a time.

Application for School Leaders

School districts frequently encounter negative momentum through:

- Declining enrollment
- Budget reductions
- Low test scores

- Labor disputes
- Community conflict
- Leadership transitions

Effective superintendents respond by:

1. Acknowledging challenges honestly.
2. Avoiding blame and defensiveness.
3. Identifying early wins.
4. Communicating frequently.
5. Celebrating progress.
6. Reinforcing district purpose.
7. Building staff confidence.
8. Remaining patient and persistent.

The Stockdale Connection refers to the relationship between resilience, leadership, and momentum, based on the experiences of James Stockdale, whose story was popularized in *Good to Great*.

(Although Yaeger and Banks do not formally use the phrase "The Stockdale Connection," the ideas in *The New Science of Momentum*—especially in the chapter "When Mo Is Against You"—closely parallel Stockdale's insights about surviving adversity and rebuilding momentum.)

This chapter closely aligns with the Stockdale Paradox:

Confront the brutal facts of your current reality while maintaining unwavering faith that you will prevail in the end.

When momentum is negative, great leaders neither deny reality nor surrender to it.

When momentum turns against an organization, the leader's job is to restore belief, create small wins, maintain trust, and keep people moving forward. Negative momentum is rarely reversed by a single dramatic action—it is overcome through consistent leadership, disciplined execution, and renewed confidence in the future.

Great Teams: 16 Things High-Performing Organizations Do Differently

serves as a practical synthesis of the book's major lessons.

Rather than introducing new concepts, it reinforces the habits and characteristics that distinguish exceptional teams from average ones. The appendix is especially valuable because it translates stories from sports, business, and other organizations into actionable leadership principles.

1. Greatness Is Intentional

- Great teams do not emerge by accident.
- They deliberately build cultures, systems, and habits that support excellence.

- Success is the result of consistent choices rather than occasional inspiration.

2. Purpose Drives Performance

- High-performing teams understand their "why."
- Members know whom they serve and why their work matters.
- Purpose creates commitment that goes beyond individual interests.

3. Culture Is the Ultimate Competitive Advantage

- Great teams intentionally shape culture.
- They recruit, reward, and retain people who fit their values.
- Culture influences behavior more powerfully than rules alone.

4. Leadership Exists at Every Level

- Exceptional organizations develop leaders throughout the system.
- Leadership is not confined to formal titles.
- Team members are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility.

5. Accountability and Trust Go Together

- Great teams create environments where people are accountable for results.
- Accountability is built on trust, not fear.
- Team members hold themselves and one another to high standards.

6. Continuous Improvement Is Essential

- Successful teams never assume they have arrived.
- They study performance, learn from mistakes, and adapt.
- Excellence requires ongoing learning and refinement.

7. Success Can Create New Risks

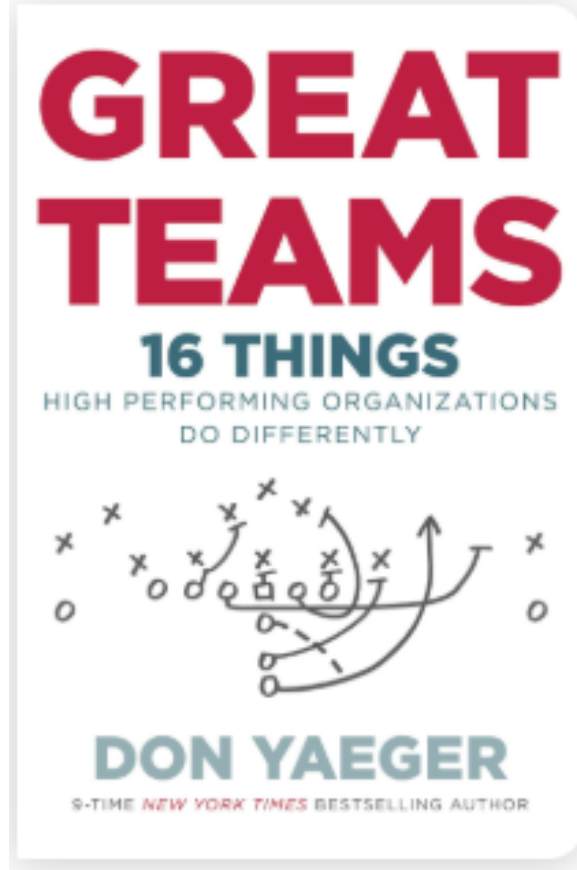
- Great teams guard against complacency, entitlement, and arrogance.
- Past accomplishments do not guarantee future success.
- Humility keeps organizations learning and improving.

8. The Four Pillars Must Work Together

Yaeger organizes the 16 characteristics into four pillars:

- Targeting Purpose — understanding the mission
- Effective Management — executing with excellence
- Activating Efficiency — maximizing talent and teamwork
- Mutual Direction — maintaining trust and shared responsibility

The appendix emphasizes that long-term success occurs when all four pillars reinforce one another.



Application for School Leaders

The appendix can be summarized in one leadership lesson:

Great districts are not built by programs, strategic plans, or charismatic leaders alone. They are built by creating a culture where purpose is clear, leadership is shared, accountability is expected, and continuous improvement becomes part of the organization's identity.

Reflection Questions for District Leadership Teams

1. Do all employees understand our district's purpose?
2. Are we developing leaders at every level?
3. What aspects of our culture help or hinder excellence?
4. How do we respond to mistakes and setbacks?
5. Are we becoming complacent because of past successes?
6. How well do our schools work together toward common goals?
7. What habits distinguish our best-performing teams?

Great teams are built intentionally through purpose, culture, leadership, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Organizations that consistently excel make these practices part of their everyday operations rather than occasional initiatives.

ChatGPT and AI

AI's Real Question Isn't Whether AI Arrives

Society is asking the wrong question about artificial intelligence. Rather than obsessing over whether Artificial Intelligence (AI) will arrive, the author contends that we should focus on how AI is already changing human institutions, culture, work, and decision-making.



1. The AGI Debate May Be Distracting Us

Much of the public conversation centers on whether machines will achieve human-level intelligence. The article argues that this debate often overshadows the more immediate and consequential ways AI is already reshaping society.

2. AI Is Already Transforming Human Behavior

Whether AGI arrives next year, next decade, or never, current AI systems are already influencing how people learn, write, communicate, create, and make decisions. The cultural effects are happening now.

3. The Real Issue Is Human Adaptation

The important question is not "Can AI think like humans?" but "How will humans adapt to increasingly capable AI systems?" Institutions often change more slowly than technology.

4. Society Must Decide What Remains Uniquely Human

As AI performs more cognitive tasks, communities will need to rethink the value of human judgment, creativity, relationships, ethics, and meaning-making. These questions are cultural as much as technological.

5. Trust and Governance Matter More Than Capability

The article emphasizes that the key challenge is not merely building more powerful AI but ensuring that AI systems are trustworthy, transparent, and aligned with human values.

6. Education Faces a Fundamental Shift

Schools and universities may need to place greater emphasis on critical thinking, ethics, creativity, collaboration, and civic responsibility—skills that become more valuable when information and routine cognitive tasks are increasingly automated.

7. The Future Is About Human-AI Partnership

Rather than focusing solely on a hypothetical AGI breakthrough, leaders should think about how humans and AI will work together. The quality of that partnership may matter more than the exact level of machine intelligence achieved.

Implications for School Leaders

For superintendents and educators, the article suggests several important questions:

- How do we prepare students for work that AI can assist with or perform?
- What human skills become more valuable in an AI-rich world?
- How should schools teach ethical AI use?
- How can educators preserve human relationships while using AI tools?
- What aspects of learning should remain distinctly human?
- How do we ensure that AI supports, rather than replaces, critical thinking?
- How can schools help students become wise users of AI rather than passive consumers?

Discussion Question

If AI eventually becomes capable of answering nearly every factual question, what should schools teach that machines cannot easily provide?

That question may be more important than determining whether AGI ever arrives.

Model Policy for the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a K–12 Public School System

Purpose

The Board of Education recognizes that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are rapidly transforming education, communication, and the workplace. AI tools offer significant opportunities to enhance teaching, learning, productivity, creativity, and operational efficiency. At the same time, AI presents challenges related to privacy, accuracy, bias, academic integrity, cybersecurity, and ethical use.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for the responsible, ethical, and educationally sound use of AI by students, staff, and administrators.



I. Board Policy

A. Philosophy

The district believes:

1. AI is a tool, not a replacement for human judgment.
2. Students should develop AI literacy as part of preparing for college, careers, and citizenship.
3. Educators should use AI to enhance teaching and learning while maintaining professional responsibility.
4. Human relationships remain central to education.
5. AI use must align with district values, educational goals, privacy requirements, and ethical standards.
6. Equity of access and opportunity should guide AI implementation.
7. Transparency is essential whenever AI significantly influences educational decisions.

B. Authorized Uses

The district may authorize AI tools for:

Instruction

- Personalized learning support
- Differentiated instruction
- Tutoring assistance
- Language translation
- Accessibility support
- Content creation
- Curriculum development

Professional Practice

- Lesson planning
- Assessment development
- Parent communications
- Administrative tasks
- Data analysis
- Professional learning

Operations

- Scheduling
- Resource allocation
- Customer service applications
- Information management

C. Prohibited Uses

AI may not be used for:

1. Sharing confidential student information with unauthorized systems.
2. Making high-stakes decisions without human review.
3. Creating discriminatory or biased outcomes.
4. Replacing required instructional responsibilities.
5. Violating copyright laws.
6. Academic dishonesty.
7. Cybersecurity violations.
8. Unauthorized surveillance of students or staff.

D. Data Privacy and Security

All AI systems used by the district shall comply with:

- FERPA
- COPPA
- State student privacy laws
- District cybersecurity requirements
- Vendor agreements approved by the district

No personally identifiable student information may be entered into public AI systems without district authorization.

II. Benefits of AI Adoption

For Students

1. Personalized learning experiences.
2. Immediate feedback.
3. Writing and research assistance.
4. Accessibility supports for students with disabilities.
5. Language translation services.
6. Career readiness skills.
7. Development of AI literacy.

For Teachers

1. Reduced administrative workload.
2. Improved lesson planning efficiency.
3. Enhanced differentiation.
4. Faster feedback generation.
5. Data analysis support.
6. Resource creation.
7. Professional productivity.

For Administrators

1. Improved communication.
2. Strategic planning support.
3. Data analysis capabilities.
4. Operational efficiencies.
5. Policy development assistance.
6. Budget analysis support.
7. Increased organizational effectiveness.

III. Suggested Process for Policy Adoption

Phase 1: Exploration (3–6 Months)

Create an AI Leadership Team

Include:

- Superintendent
- Curriculum leaders
- Building principals
- Teachers
- Technology staff

- Parents
- Students
- School board representatives

Responsibilities

- Review emerging research
- Evaluate current AI usage
- Identify opportunities and risks
- Develop recommendations

Phase 2: Pilot Programs

Select Volunteer Participants

Pilot:

- Teacher use cases
- Student use cases
- Administrative applications

Collect Data

Measure:

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- User satisfaction
- Risks
- Professional development needs

Phase 3: Policy Development

Develop:

- Board policy
- Administrative procedures
- Student expectations
- Staff guidelines
- Parent communications

Phase 4: Professional Development

Provide training for:

Teachers

- AI literacy
- Instructional applications
- Ethical considerations
- Academic integrity

Administrators

- Leadership implications
- Risk management
- Data privacy
- Change management

Students

- Responsible use
- Critical evaluation
- Citation requirements
- Digital citizenship

Phase 5: Full Implementation

Implement district-wide with:

- Ongoing monitoring
- Annual review
- Continuous improvement

IV. Administrative Procedures

A. AI Tool Approval Process

The Technology Department shall maintain an approved list of AI applications.

Approval criteria:

Educational Value

- Supports district goals
- Improves teaching and learning

Privacy Compliance

- Meets legal requirements
- Protects student information

Security Standards

- Cybersecurity review completed

Accessibility

- Supports diverse learners

Equity

- Available to all students

B. Student Use Guidelines

Students may:

- Use approved AI tools.
- Receive teacher-directed assistance.
- Use AI for brainstorming and learning support.
- Use AI as authorized by teachers.

Students must:

- Acknowledge AI assistance when required.
- Verify information generated by AI.
- Follow academic integrity expectations.

Students may not:

- Submit AI-generated work as entirely their own.
- Use AI to cheat.
- Enter confidential information.

C. Staff Use Guidelines

Staff may:

- Use approved AI tools.
- Utilize AI to enhance productivity.
- Employ AI to support instruction.

Staff must:

- Review all AI-generated content.
- Exercise professional judgment.
- Protect confidential information.
- Verify accuracy before distribution.

D. Academic Integrity Procedures

The district recognizes that AI changes traditional definitions of authorship.

Teachers shall:

Clearly Define

- Permitted AI uses
- Restricted AI uses
- Citation requirements

Emphasize

- Critical thinking
- Original analysis
- Human creativity
- Ethical use

E. Parent Communication

The district shall:

- Inform parents about AI implementation.
- Explain benefits and risks.
- Provide resources on AI literacy.
- Offer opportunities for feedback.

F. Annual Review

The Superintendent shall provide an annual report to the Board regarding:

- AI implementation progress
- Emerging opportunities
- Privacy and security concerns
- Student outcomes
- Professional development needs
- Recommended policy revisions

Key Principle

Artificial Intelligence should amplify human intelligence, not replace it.

The district's goal is not simply to adopt AI, but to use it responsibly to improve learning, strengthen teaching, increase operational effectiveness, and prepare students to thrive in a world where AI will be a permanent part of work, citizenship, and daily life.

Questions for Board Discussion

1. What AI skills should every graduate possess?
2. How will we protect student privacy?
3. How should academic integrity evolve in the AI era?
4. What professional development do educators need?
5. How can AI improve equity and access?
6. What decisions should always remain human decisions?
7. How will we evaluate success over the next five years?

This framework is designed to be comprehensive enough for board adoption while allowing administrators flexibility to adapt procedures as AI technology evolves.

AI Skills Every High School Graduate Should Possess

As AI becomes as commonplace as the internet, search engines, and smartphones, the question for schools is no longer whether students should use AI, but what competencies every graduate should possess. AI literacy should be viewed much like digital literacy—a foundational skill for citizenship, employment, and lifelong learning.



1. Understanding What AI Is—and What It Is Not

Students should understand:

- How AI systems work at a basic level
- The difference between AI, machine learning, and automation
- That AI predicts patterns rather than "thinking" like humans
- The strengths and limitations of AI systems

Outcome: Students become informed users rather than passive consumers.

2. Effective Prompting and Questioning

Students should learn how to:

- Ask clear questions
- Refine prompts
- Use follow-up questions
- Guide AI toward useful outputs

The future workforce will increasingly reward those who know how to ask good questions.

Outcome: Students become skilled AI collaborators.

3. Critical Evaluation of AI Outputs

Students should always ask:

- Is this accurate?
- Is this biased?
- Is this complete?
- What evidence supports this claim?

AI can confidently provide incorrect information.

Outcome: Students become critical thinkers rather than AI-dependent thinkers.

4. Verification and Fact-Checking

Students should know how to:

- Cross-check sources
- Verify claims
- Distinguish evidence from opinion
- Confirm accuracy independently

Outcome: Students understand that AI is a starting point, not the final authority.

5. Ethical AI Use

Students should understand:

- Academic integrity
- Proper attribution
- Responsible use
- Privacy concerns
- Intellectual property issues

Outcome: Students become ethical digital citizens.

6. AI-Assisted Research Skills

Students should learn how to:

- Use AI for brainstorming
- Organize research
- Generate questions
- Explore perspectives

while still conducting independent inquiry.

Outcome: Students become stronger researchers.

7. Human-AI Collaboration

Students should understand:

- What tasks AI does well
- What tasks humans do better
- When to rely on AI
- When human judgment is essential

Outcome: Students learn to augment rather than replace their own thinking.

8. Creativity and Innovation Using AI

Students should be able to:

- Generate ideas
- Create content
- Design projects
- Explore solutions

using AI as a creative partner.

Outcome: Students become creators rather than merely consumers.

9. Data and Privacy Awareness

Students should understand:

- Digital footprints
- Data collection
- Privacy risks
- Security considerations

Outcome: Students protect themselves and others in digital environments.

10. Understanding AI's Impact on Society

Students should examine:

- Employment changes
- Democracy and misinformation
- Bias and fairness
- Economic impacts
- Social consequences

Outcome: Students become informed citizens capable of participating in public discussions about AI.

Three Human Skills That Become More Important Because of AI

Ironically, the rise of AI makes certain human capabilities even more valuable.

1. Critical Thinking

The ability to evaluate information and make sound judgments.

2. Communication

The ability to listen, collaborate, persuade, and build relationships.

3. Character

The ability to act ethically, responsibly, and with integrity.

These remain uniquely human strengths.

A Graduate Profile for the AI Era

Every high school graduate should be able to say:

"I know how to use AI effectively, evaluate its outputs critically, use it ethically, protect my privacy, and combine AI tools with human judgment to solve problems and contribute positively to society."

Questions for School Boards and Superintendents

1. What AI competencies should be required for graduation?
2. How will AI literacy be embedded across the curriculum?
3. How should academic integrity policies evolve?
4. What professional development do teachers need?
5. How will students learn to verify AI-generated information?
6. What ethical standards should guide AI use?
7. How do we ensure students remain thinkers, not merely users of technology?

The most successful graduates of the next decade will not necessarily be those who know the most facts. They will be those who can think critically, work effectively with AI, evaluate information wisely, and apply human judgment in a rapidly changing world. For schools, AI literacy is quickly becoming as essential as reading, writing, and mathematics.

Horace Mann League 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](#)
-

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 Furlis.

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)

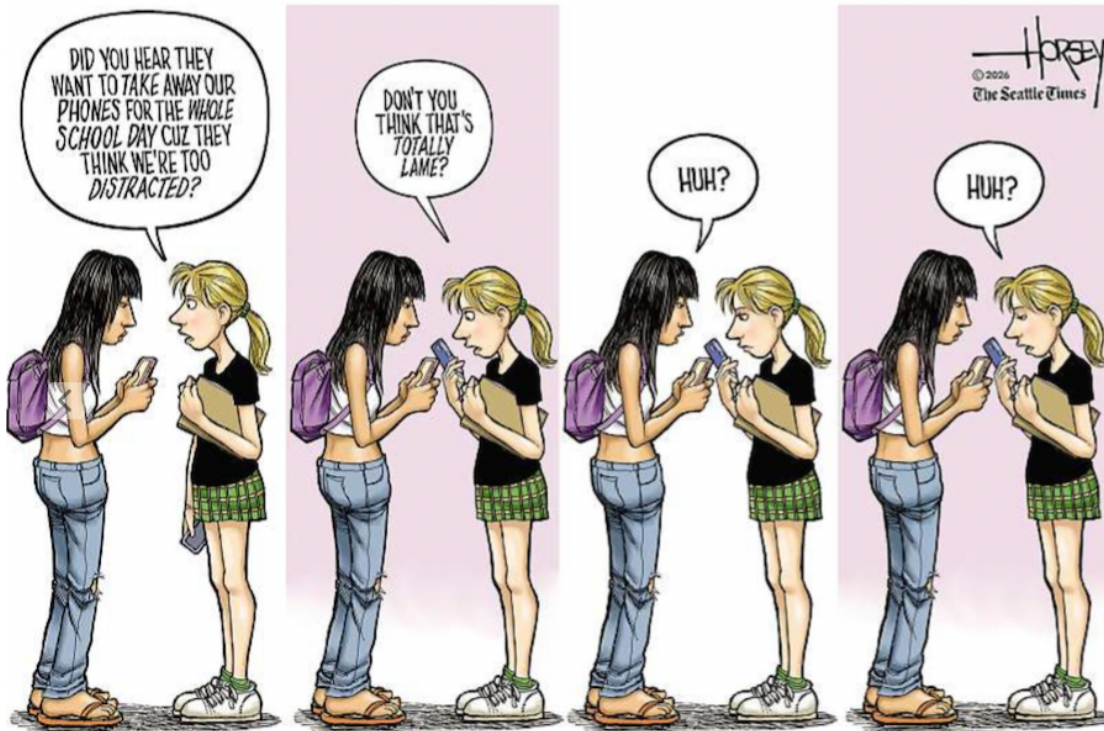
Good to Great: The Guide to the Superintendent's Success by Jack McKay

The Guide for Using AI - ChatGPT (Getting Started)

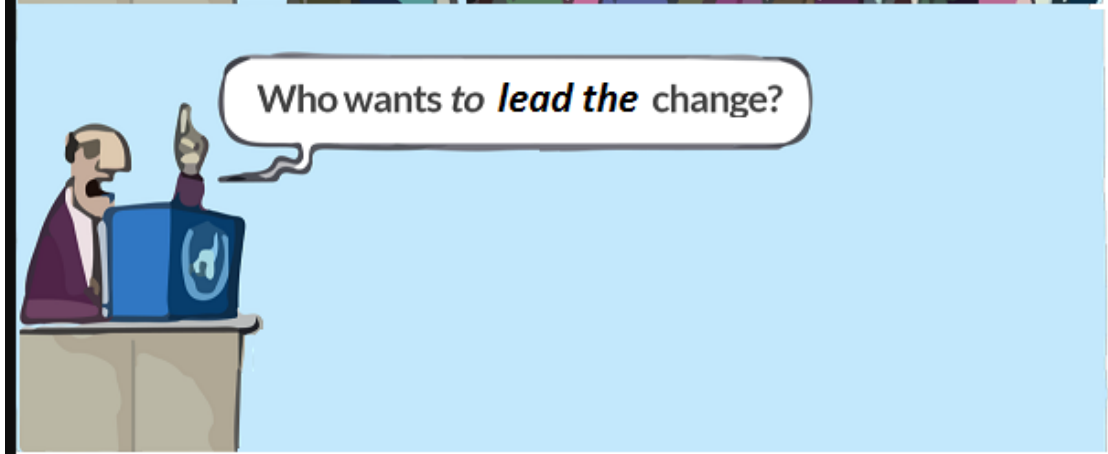
The Book of Wisdom (Good coffee
- Great Friendships)

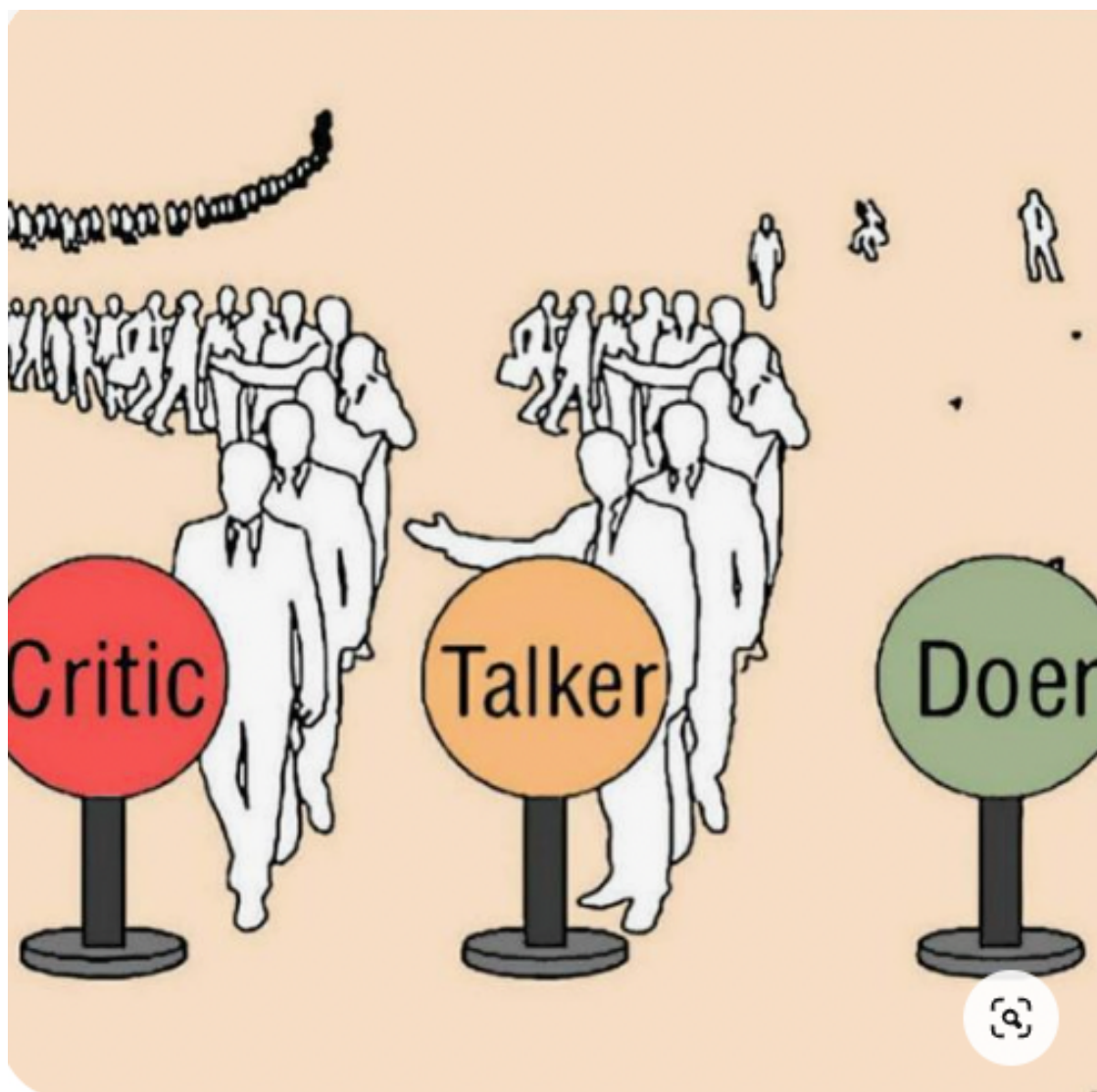


Cartoon for the Week



Some Cartoons that Seem to Endure





Fill in the blank!

If my students only remember one thing from my class, I hope it's



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)
-

Website

About Us



Address:

HML

James Minichello, Exec. Dir.
400 Cameron Station #121
Alexandria, VA 22304

[Get In Touch](#)

Horace Mann League Officers, Directors, and Past Presidents

The Horace Mann League of the USA Officers and Directors

President

Dr. Carl Hermanns,
Ret. Clinical Professor
Arizona State Univ

President-elect

Jeanne Dewese
Ret. Supt. of Schools. VT

Vice President

Ms. Toba Cohen-Dunning, Exec. Dir. Omaha PS Foundation

Past President

Dr. Kevin Riley, Retired Supt. Gretna Public Schools (NE) and Ret. Assoc. Prof., Dept. of Ed. Leadership, U. of Nebraska-Omaha.

The Board of Directors

Dr. Ruben Alejandro,
Student Impact Consulting,
Weslaco, TX

Dr. Martin Brooks

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

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

Executive Director. Tri-State Consortium, Setauket, NY
Dr. Martha Bruckner
 Bd. of Governors, Metro Comm. College, Omaha, NE
Mr. Douglas Burge,
 Supt., Zillah, WA
Dr. Roxann Caserio,
 Supt. North Ridgefield, OH
Dr. Linda Darling Hammond
 Professor, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA
Dr. Jim Lloyd,
 Supt., Omstead Falls schools, OH
Mr. Tobin Novasio, Supt, Hardin School Districts, Billing, (MT)
Dr. Theresa Rouse, Supt, Joliet Schools, (IL)
Dr. Ray Sanchez
 Supt. of Schools Tarrytown, NY
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)
Greg Wyman
 Ret. Supt. San Tan Valley AZ

Executive Director
 of the HML
James Minichello
 Alexandria, VA

Past Executive Directors

2025 Jack McKay
 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

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 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.

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
 1994 Edna Manning, OK
 1993 Malcolm Katz, GA
 1992 Bob Fortenberry, MS
 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 Pearse WI



<https://tinyurl.com/3bdfajvj>



<https://facebook.com/hmleague.org>



@HMannLeague

HML | 205 E. Stanford Ave. | Ellensburg, WA 98365 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!