



From the Classroom to Courtroom

Hot Topics for Independent School Leaders

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independent school partner, parent, alum, and trustee
founder, **approach**

approach




**Hello, thank you,
notes, & goals**

Goals & notes

- Continue the ongoing learning you do and conversations you have around independent school trends. Choose your own adventure?
- Chat, learn from each other, move when you want, ask questions
- Let's commit to this being an okay space for:
 - Learning (it's okay not to know the answer - that applies to me too)
 - Mistakes
 - dis·a·gree·ment / ˌdɪsəˈɡreɪmənt/ *noun* : a difference of opinion/perspective;
natural & common occurrence in human interaction
 - *warning: side effects may include*: healthy debate & exchange of ideas.
- No legal advice today, friends.
- The stories aren't about you (even if they sound like it).



Trends

A top-down view of a desk with a yellow background. On the left, a silver laptop is partially visible. In the center, a yellow spiral-bound notebook is open, with a white sticky note on top. To the right of the notebook is a yellow coffee cup on a matching saucer. Further right, a pair of black-rimmed glasses is placed. In the bottom right, a yellow smartphone is shown with a white screen displaying a text message. An orange pencil lies horizontally below the notebook.

Should I get a political
yard sign?

What to do about the
Cary family divorce?

Get more dog food!!!

Hey - can
u chat?
The kids
are
planning
a protest.
Thanks!

What's Coming Across My Desk

The Impact of Geopolitical Events

Election + wars
Policies, guidelines
Community letters/statements (letters, petitions, and statements are having a real moment here)

Culture Clashes Continue

Topics above (esp. discourse) + DEIB

Affinity Groups

Do we, don't we, how will we?

Governance

Trustee role confusion (includes overstep), including in risk management and philanthropy
Succession planning
Committee function/challenges
Operational nuts + bolts (incl. documents-e.g., bylaws)
Head + Board goal-setting challenges
Board bandwidth + engagement challenges
Background checks

Head of School Contracts

All the things, including head representation

Risk Management

Setting up & maturing processes
Safety/security

Parent Challenges

Partnership/pushback?
Family court
Enrollment contract denial
Increased litigiousness
DEI backlash

Investigations (internal, external)

Employee Challenges

Boundaries
Increased litigiousness
Unionization
Hiring/retention/scheduling & comp
Abuse of sick leave/PTO (more subs!)

Mental Health

Employee + Student

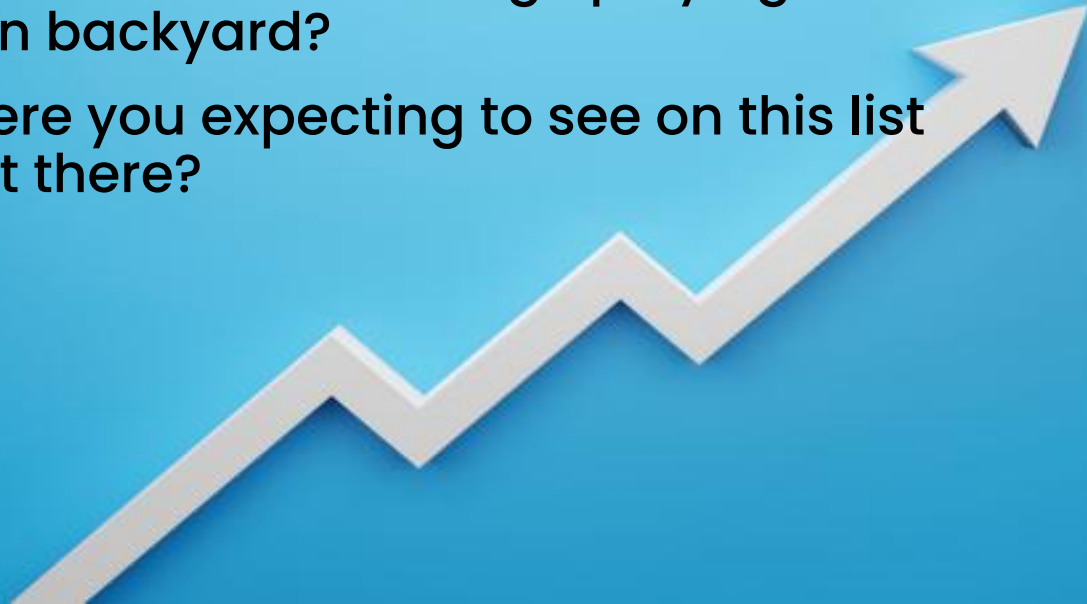
AI & Social Media & Cell Phones

All the things, including fake pics & phone policies

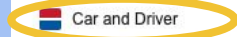
Trends & Challenges: Let's Chat

Turn-n-talk:

- Which of these do you see in your own school's context?
- How is this trend or challenge playing out in your own backyard?
- What were you expecting to see on this list that isn't there?



The impact of geopolitical events on campus



Biden Administration Proposes Sweeping Ban on Chinese Vehicle Software

The proposed rule would ban internet-connected cars equipped with software that originates from China or Russia.



Understanding Geopolitical Events and Their Impact

Geopolitical events

- e.g., elections, wars, international elections, trade disputes, refugee crises).
 - 2024 is a global elections supercycle - ~ 54% of the world's population heads to the polls this year. (EY-Parthenon).
 - This will not end on November 5/6.
- This is a challenging time.
- This work will look different in different communities.

How we see these
concepts playing out
across the country.

The landscape.

Community polarity & conflict on the rise

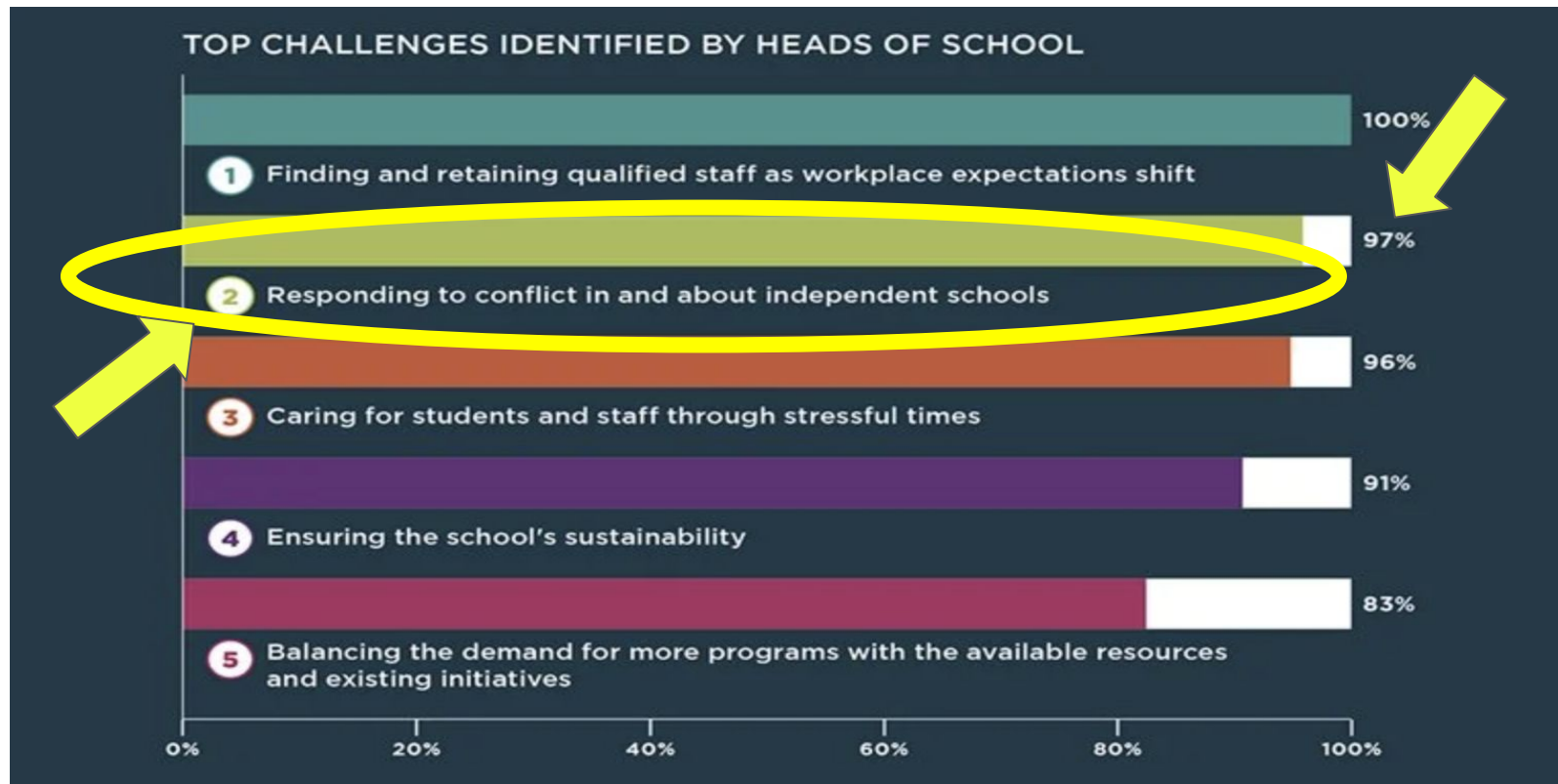
2016: Leading up to and following the election, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) experiences a notable increase in member outreach about **conflict** within school communities. This *further* increases post pandemic, racial reckoning, and subsequent intense scrutiny of K–12 education. And yet . . .

2021: only 23% of sitting heads reported felt very prepared to address and manage community **polarization** at their schools.

20% named community **polarization** as one of their top challenges during the fall 2022 semester.

Then we get to 2023 . . .

2022: 20% named community **polarization** as one of their top challenges. Then we get to 2023:



Source: NAIS Research: 2023 Hot Issues Survey: Challenges and Opportunities for Independent Schools

How we show up



- In person and online
- Legal obligation to remain politically nonpartisan (501(c)(3) status).
- More nuanced than that – What is the line between personal and professional? You don't cease being a person when you work at a school, but you are subject to a higher level of scrutiny.
 - What are we saying through words, clothing, signage, etc.?
 - And what does it impact?
 - Never forget the power imbalance and the goal to create a tolerance haven.

Most importantly →



(Thank you for having me.
Now, Q&A.)

