

Thriving in a new reality. לְחַיֵּי חַיִּים בְּעוֹלָם לְשִׁיפָּא.

UNLOCKING SCHOOL SUCCESS:

What every Trustee and Head needs to know about Head support and evaluation

with Dr. Nina Butler, Dr. Steven Lorch and Cheryl Finkel



Mission

The Day School Leadership Think Tank is an unprecedented collaboration of leaders of national day school networks, universities and foundations from across the spectrum of Jewish life who have joined together to strategically promote effective, sustainable leadership for Jewish day schools.

Vision

It is broadly understood that there is a leadership crisis in the field of day school education. The crisis is reflected in the problems schools face when seeking to hire first-rate heads of school and principals, the inadequate pipeline of qualified day school leaders at all levels of administration within schools and the too-frequent turnover of these leaders. Volunteer leaders also face myriad challenges in defining the parameters and boundaries of their roles as board members and in appropriately supporting their lead professionals. The Day School Leadership Think Tank promotes strategies and tactics to move the field toward effective, sustainable leadership.

The strength of the Think Tank stems from the participation of many diverse organizations that might implement or fund Think Tank recommendations. We thus anticipate a smooth transition from conception to implementation. Through our collaborative efforts, we will stimulate effective, sustainable day school leadership.

Goals:

1. Participants will learn about the work of the Think Tank and ten schools regarding head support and evaluation
2. Participants will understand key benefits and challenges of the head support and evaluation process
3. Participants will consider adapting what they've learned in this session to their own practice

Session Outline:

1. Introduction to the work of the Think Tank and the ten schools
2. Small-group learning – a close reading of one theme

Each group will read a theme together, identify three key learnings and three key questions, and record their responses on chart paper.

3. Gallery walk – surveying all six themes

Read – respond – rotate

Participants will walk around the room and view each exhibit. Using post-its, they will respond with warm feedback (“This resonates with me”) or cool feedback (“I wonder about this”).

4. Chalk talk – synthesizing and evaluating the learning
5. Making a plan – individual note taking

Attachments:

Graphic organizer

Theme 1: Clarity and Communication

Theme 2: Composition and Governance

Theme 3: First Things First

Theme 4: Individual vs. Institution

Theme 5: Support and Evaluation

Theme 6: Transition, Change, and Crisis

Gallery Walk instructions

Chalk Talk instructions

Takeaways

Introduction

Small-group learning

Theme: _____

Three key learnings: 1.

2.

3.

Three key questions: 1.

2.

3.

Gallery walk

Chalk talk

My plan

Theme 1 : Clarity and Communication

Participants identified explicit and open communication among all parties involved in head support and evaluation as contributing to successful implementation. Schools with effective HSECs attributed their success, in part, to clear communication, and in schools in which the HSEC was not yet functioning optimally, the need for clarity and communication was identified as an important factor that was missing. Topics about which clarity of communication was deemed essential included roles (of the head, of the committee chair, of the committee members), relationships (between the head and the committee, between the committee chair and the board chair), processes (support, and how it is promoted; evaluation – who does it, when, and how; reporting – to whom, how often, and in what form), and priorities and goals (for the head, for the school).

The importance of clarity and communication manifested itself in several ways:

Shortly after the formation of the HSEC at *School A*, it became apparent that the members of the HSEC did not truly grasp what the job of the head entailed. Initially, their familiarity with the head's role and responsibilities was derived from documents, but these did not offer sufficient guidance to committee members. Subsequently, additional protocols were put in place to address this issue. Interviews and self-evaluations were designed in order to clarify for the board the breadth of the head's responsibilities and roles within the school.

In *School B*, the relationship between the HSEC's evaluation and the board's role in rehiring the head was a key area of unclarity and miscommunication. Though the HSEC reviewed the head of school's performance in accordance with his goals and communicated its detailed findings in writing both to the head of school and to the board, the provision for rehiring was left vague. The Board chair said that, two years before the head's contract was eligible for renewal, the board chair would "check in," but there seemed to be no protocol for "checking in." Communication was vague, leading the head to believe his position was in jeopardy, and he began interviewing elsewhere. The communication styles of the players also contributed to misunderstandings. In this case, the HSEC chair did not understand what his role was – to defend the head of school to the Board? Defend the board to the head of school? They agreed that defining the role

and purpose of the HSEC more clearly would help clarify where the committee fits in vis a vis the Board, the school and the head.

In *School C*, the HSEC's role, responsibilities, and processes are clear and well understood. The head of school uses the HSEC as a forum to openly discuss thoughts, anxieties and concerns. There is a level of trust among the head and members of the HSEC. However, while both parties would like there to be honest communication, they are aware of the tension that emerges from the HSEC's role as evaluator and reporter to the Board.

In *School D*, the Board's goal in establishing the HSEC was to bring pertinent issues to the attention of the head of school, and support him in dealing with those issues. The committee, in consultation with the Head, drafts goals for the year. This year, to increase the clarity of communication about goals and their achievement, performance indicators were specified for each goal. The key lack of clarity in this school related to the data gathered for each performance indicator. While the head of school had assembled the data, it was difficult to discern the voice of the head in understanding and interpreting the data.

In *School E*, though there had been a HSEC in the past, there is none currently in place. As a result, the evaluation process is vague, and there is no clear way for the board to decide whether or not to retain the head. The head of school is trying to both re-establish a HSEC and develop a strategic plan, with the expectation that they will ensure improved transparency and communication. The HSEC will work with the head to develop objectives for the head and create an evaluation and data collection plan.

School G has a full-time HOS for the first time and there is a lack of clarity around her role. In working out that role, it is necessary to provide allowances for room to grow and make mistakes.

The HOS and HSEC in *School I* have different understandings or ideas about how the evaluation process for the HOS should work, and there is not a clear means of resolving this disagreement. Those discrepancies are around different definition of goals (and how they might differ from or include day to day responsibilities), how to involve staff that the HOS supervises (should they be interviewed for the evaluation), and how the HOS should receive the information from the evaluation

Key comments and questions that emerged from the conversation about these schools include:

Clarity of purpose: When a Board establishes a HSEC, its purpose and the scope of its responsibilities need to be carefully set out. Issues to consider include (a) how the HSEC will, and will not, serve as a bridge between the Board and the head, (b) its role in support, evaluation, and contract renewal (if any), and the balance among these functions, (c) the evolution of its role over time, particularly as a head of school becomes more established, or as a new head is hired and inducted, (d) the particular role of the HSEC chair, in relation to the head, the committee, the board, and the board chair, and (e) setting the ground rules for what the HSEC can do and act upon and what the HOS can do and act upon (i.e. who can make hiring decisions).

Definitions: In a head of school's job description or annual goals, some goals are difficult to quantify, such as "improve," "support," "inspire." The HSEC needs to work with the head and the board to define those terms. In addition, the *annual* goals both reflect the job description and differ from them. The board, in its charge to the HSEC, or the HSEC itself, should determine whether to use one document or the other, or both, as its point of reference for working with the head.

Communication with Board: The information to which the HSEC is privy is complex and confidential, and the committee is responsible for communicating it to the Board in a way that both reflects its complexity and protects the confidentiality of the interaction between the committee and the head of school concerning his/her growth over time. Though evaluation ratings and contract decisions are finite and cumulative, the head of school's growth is formative and ongoing. Board members seeing evaluative data or documents need to be given some context. Consideration needs to be given to where the documents and other data collected will be housed, and to who will have access to them.

An educated board is in a better position to receive the committee's report and act on it. Areas of school operation that would help board members contextualize information about the head include school mission, vision, and philosophy; educational theory and practice; the roles of the head of school and of the HSEC; and best practices in governance. This education can help build trust, both from the board to the head of school as a professional, and from the head to the board, so that the head will be open to hearing feedback from the board. Additionally,

clearly defined roles for board members should be spelled out before people become board members.

Support vs. Evaluation: This tension, inherent in the HSEC's mission, has implications for the clarity of roles and expectations. One suggestion that arose was for both parties to be explicit that "now we are in support mode," or "this conversation is in the context of your evaluation." Another suggestion was for the HSEC to report to the Board only about the head's goals, and not performance. Then a year before contracts are considered, a new committee would be established to interview all constituents and report to the Board on the actualization of the goals.

Personal relationships: Ultimately, the individuals occupying the roles of head of school and HSEC chair are people, with unique personalities, emotional needs and communication styles. The chemistry, or "fit," between these two personalities is an important contributing factor to the committee's effectiveness. Careful selection and thorough orientation of the HSEC chair can help prevent problems from occurring or recurring. When relationships need to be repaired, how should the people involved go about it?

While sometimes the personal connections are strong between the HOS and HSEC chair, as evident in these schools, without clear roles and an understanding of how this relationship should function, a good connection between the two cannot be guaranteed in the natural turnover of lay leaders or professionals. Therefore protocols and role definitions should be in place and clearly defined.

- **Head of school as manager:** Much of the work of the head of school is performed indirectly through others whom the head supervises. The extent to which the head will be held accountable for the performance of others – in fairness, what aspects of others' performance reflect on the head's supervision and management – is an important and delicate question to clarify.
- **Voice:** The HSEC's proceedings are enriched by a multiplicity of voices (board, committee, and head). Schools should strive to maintain equity of voice among its decision makers while preserving the distinctiveness of each voice, so that all voices can be discerned.

Theme two : First Things First: Functionality of HSEC in relation to the functionality of the Board

An effective HSEC is one of a number of features of a well functioning board. (Other features include a shared understanding on the part of all trustees of the school's mission and the role of the board in supporting and advancing that mission; the existence of a strategic plan which shapes the board's annual agenda and committee charges; differentiation between operations and governance; and a Committee on Trustees that profiles the board and cultivates, trains, and evaluates trustees.) It cannot compensate for other elements of effective governance that may be missing or deficient, and the absence of some or all of the other indicators of effective board structure and function is likely to have a negative effect on the ability of the HSEC to accomplish its work of effectively supporting and evaluating the Head of School.

The Board of *School F* is fairly new, but they are following the same model as the founding Board, focusing on issues of the day-to-day school operations especially as they relate to the children of the Board members. To help them develop into the strategic Board they want to become, they have engaged a consulting firm to train and assist them. However, they are still at an early stage of this transition. One of the consequences of the focus on becoming less operational and more strategic is a concern that the legitimate "current events" issues handled by the HSEC may be an inappropriate incursion into operations. At this early stage of its evolution into a strategic Board, the school's leadership finds it challenging to distinguish between the role and purview of the Board and of the HSEC.

School G has recently overhauled its Board, reducing its membership from over 60 to under 20. At the same time, there has been a major transformation in professional leadership, with the appointment for the first time of a full-time Head of School. The Board is just beginning to recognize that a "cultural clash" has emerged on the Board between long-standing Board members, who consider the school's mission and culture valuable in itself and important to preserve, and newer Board members, who bring a more businesslike or corporate attitude toward governance. For example, these factions clashed over the impact on the staff of the school's budgetary crisis. Concerns about the Board's composition and direction have tended to find their way onto the HSEC agenda and have made it more difficult for the HSEC to pay attention to its actual charge, which is the support and evaluation of the Head. This, in turn, has interfered with the ability of the HSEC to offer support to the new Head of School.

For *School H* roles need to be clarified, especially that of the HOS. When it came time for evaluation, the HOS saw the pieces that she was responsible for and it was too overwhelming. There were too many things on the list that shouldn't fall under HOS's job. Also of concern are the boundaries between the roles of HSEC and HOS vis a vis administrative decisions and challenges with regard to faculty and staff. These needed to be sorted out before the HSEC can function as needed.

School I's Head of School is only the second Head of School in its history, following many years without a CEO for the school as a whole. The Board is still figuring out how best to work in a way that complements the Head of School. For example, the HSEC's plan for evaluating the Head includes a survey of all board members, as well as interviews of key staff conducted by HSEC members.

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Key comments and questions that emerged from the conversation about these schools include:

- **Board readiness:** The Head Support and Evaluation Committee is one governance tool among many that contribute to the overall effectiveness of a Board and its ability to make optimal use of its Head of School's talents. In some schools, the Board has made more progress in establishing a HSEC than in other key governance initiatives. An unevenness in Board readiness has the potential to impede the work of the HSEC in several ways: by drawing the HSEC's attention toward governance issues and away from supporting and evaluating the Head's performance; by imposing realities that limit the capacity or flexibility of the HSEC to act in the interest of the school and the Head; by engendering an "us vs. them" attitude among HSEC members toward the Board, and vice versa; and by creating an environment in which the Head of School feels vulnerable and unsafe.
- **Limitations on the HSEC's purview:** Sometimes an issue identified by the HSEC is by its nature a Board issue, beyond the capacity of the HSEC to address by itself. When the Board is itself not yet an effective governance body, these issues may go unaddressed.
- **Timing:** Is there ever a time in a school's development when it would be premature to establish a HSEC? What preconditions, in terms of other governance structures and understandings, Head of School job description, or other factors, might be considered critical to the successful launch of a HSEC? During such a pre-HSEC stage, what other options does a school have – e.g., a coach, a mentor, a management consultant – to ensure that the Head's performance is being maximized?

Theme three : Support vs. Evaluation

The inherent tension in the mission – in fact, in the very name – of the Head Support and Evaluation Committee, namely to “support” and “evaluate” the head of school, emerged as an important topic of discussion. The following questions were raised: Can the committee charged with enabling and encouraging growth in a head also be responsible for holding that head accountable? Assuming it is possible, is it ideal for a single body to both support a head’s professional and personal growth, and be the one to decide whether the head’s contract will be renewed? How can a head feel safe taking risks and trying new things, knowing that every discussion will contribute to the committee’s view of his or her effectiveness? Or, perhaps it is a false dichotomy.

This dilemma manifested itself in several ways:

In *School A*, two of the goals of the Head Support and Evaluation Committee are to 1) Support the head’s professional performance and growth and 2) Evaluate the head’s performance against the expectations for the head of school role. There are four areas which have been identified for evaluation: Management, Leadership, Communication, and Curriculum/Instruction. The head fills out an extensive self-evaluation form relating to these four topics that is submitted to the HSEC. The committee chair then conducts an interview with the head. Board members are also given a form to fill out which asks them to comment on the head’s performance in the four stated areas.

School B’s HSEC was founded primarily to serve as a third-party reality check for both the head of school and board chair in evaluating the head of school. At one point, tension increased due to the Board chair’s “offhand” statement that two years before the head’s contract would be considered for renewal, the board chair and head of school would “check in.” The chair of the HSEC was unsure of how to support the head so that the head would not feel alone, and still carry out the function of the committee, namely to evaluate the performance of the head of school.

In *School C*, the HSEC wants an unfiltered view of the head of school and sees one of its roles as advisor to the head. It sees itself as a sounding board for the head, and wants her to feel comfortable exploring issues and options. Yet the committee is ultimately responsible for evaluating the head’s progress and reporting to the Board.

In *School D*, the head of school looks to this process for his own professional development growth, while the Board is interested

in evaluating the head’s performance, bringing to his attention issues that needed to be addressed, and supporting him in dealing with them.

The HOS in *School F* has not been evaluated in six years, but the HSEC has begun to meet with the HOS infrequently. The most recent meeting started the discussion of how the HOS would be evaluated. The HOS feels very supported by the HSEC, particularly the chair, who is a psychologist. The fact that the HSEC chair is not a parent in the school may be a contributing factor to the head’s sense of support.

The evaluation process for the HOS in *School H* brought to light the overwhelming nature of the job as it currently exists. When the HSEC was created, the HOS did not have a say on what their role would be. The HOS does not feel supported enough. This is especially true in areas dealing with financial challenges.

While the HSEC and HOS in *School I* agree that support and evaluation are both important functions, they do not agree on how these functions should be carried out. To try to resolve this, they have each attempted to design an evaluation process, and neither is satisfied with what the other proposed. The goals with which the HSEC would like to evaluate the HOS include eight job responsibilities, whereas the HOS would like to establish 3-5 goals which are agreed upon by the HSEC, Board president and HOS. The two parties also differ in how to collect data, with the HSEC wanting to interview staff and the HOS wanting to be reviewed based on progress in achieving the goals they set. The proposals for support also differ somewhat: the HOS is asking for meetings with HSEC several times a year, executive feedback and a 360 evaluation, while the HSEC suggests regular meetings, shared agenda creation with the HOS, confidential meetings, and offers to be a sounding board to the HOS.

The HSEC in *School J* has not been comfortable with the previous HOS evaluation, which was focused on the list of HOS responsibilities. The HSEC was not comfortable with the evaluation not being about supporting HOS and helping the school, so they’ve changed it. Now the HOS is being evaluated on goals and not responsibilities and the HSEC is trying to be in the role of support. However, the HSEC is still wondering how to link the evaluation of both goals and responsibilities. The evaluation process now limits the ability to evaluate the additional tasks required of HOS. HSEC wants to know how they can look for the growth of the HOS rather than just has he accomplished his goals.

Key comments and questions that emerged from the conversation about these schools include:

- **Safety comes first:** For the committee to fulfill both its support and its evaluation functions, safety is a key ingredient. The head of school cannot be expected to be open to supportive exploration of professional challenges, and the committee members will feel conflicted in their dual roles, unless trusting relationships and fair, shared norms and ground rules have been established.
- **Balance:** The integrity of the committee's work depends on a balance between support for professional growth and evaluation for accountability. If the process feels weighted toward one function, with less attention given to the other, it is likely that the committee will not succeed in either of its charges.
- **Identifying needs:** One of the factors contributing to a balance between support and evaluation is explicit attention to identifying and meeting the needs of the head, as well as the needs of the committee members, in the committee's work.
- **Data Collection:** Committees should carefully consider whether the extent of detail in the evaluation process contributes both to its evaluative function and its supportive function. If it feels as though the extent of data gathering is primarily for accountability, the committee runs the risk of micro-managing. In some cases, having the tasks outlined and detailed with such a degree of specificity might make a head of school feel supported and protected. What are the preferred data sources for ongoing, formative assessment?
- **Supporting a struggling head:** Can the support and evaluation model work if the head of school is not doing well and the committee considers his or her job at risk? How might the model need to be modified in this case?
- **Career Trajectory:** Is the balance of support and evaluation the same for a beginning head of school and a veteran head of school? Though there are undoubtedly exceptions to the rule, a new head will tend to need more direction and guidance than a veteran head. On the other hand, a new head will also tend to be more open to critical feedback than a veteran head. How should the HSEC factor the career stage of the HOS into its work?
- **Transparency vs. confidentiality:** To what extent can the head be completely open with the HSEC? One approach posits that transparency ensures that everyone is on the same page and can work together towards a common goal. On the other hand, in order for growth to occur, the head must feel safe to take risks in a non-threatening, non-judgmental environment. Is it possible for the head to receive this from the HSEC? Or perhaps that aspect of the head's professional development should come in the form of a confidential relationship with a mentor or peer coach? What might it look like if the support and evaluation components were entrusted to two separate groups of people?
- **Under pressure:** What are some ways a HSEC might encourage a head of school to grow or stretch beyond his natural comfort zone in a way that is still supportive? How do we move away from using pressure as a surrogate for evaluation? At what point is stretching too much detrimental to the process?

Theme four : HSEC Composition and Governance

Selecting appropriate members for the HSEC emerged as an important step. A related step is educating the committee members on how to function effectively. Questions that arose include: Who are the people identified and invited to serve? What qualities and qualifications must they possess? How should they be inducted into their roles so as to maximize the committee's effectiveness?

This issue manifested itself in several ways:

School A's chairperson of the head of school support committee identified several characteristics she feels are critical in choosing members of the committee. "It is critical to ensure that the individuals have a sense of perspective and knowledge of its history, that they be critical thinkers, fair minded, objective, and have positive intentions for school and head." Two of the members of the HSEC are parents or former parents in the school, and one is a previous head of another school.

For the first two years, *School B* had three members on its HSEC: the head of school who immediately preceded the current head, who is a member of the executive committee; a former board chair of another local day school, who founded that school's HSEC; and a head of school from out of town who was knowledgeable about the community. In its third and current year, the makeup of the committee changed to reflect the school's strategic goals for that year. The out of town head was rotated off the committee, and two new members were added: a successful former head of school of a local elementary school, who is also a former parent and knowledgeable in leadership and board governance; and a current head of a local elementary school with a business background who successfully connected that school with another local high school. Though having someone who is familiar with the current state of affairs at the school was desired, the head of school was uncomfortable with any of the suggested names of current parents or board members. Despite their on-paper qualifications and expertise, the committee members admittedly lack experience and resources to assist in the current situation.

The HSEC in *School C* is composed of an Executive committee member (in this case the Board treasurer), a board member selected by the HOS, the Board chair, and a past president (currently this person also serves as the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee). The HSEC Chair is the immediate past board president. The chair reports that the members were chosen because they understand the role of the committee, and not just

because of their position on the board. The head of school was asked if this roster of committee members was acceptable.

As the leadership of *School E* is being transferred from donors to parents, the head of school describes a board that primed for a change. The school had a HSEC for six years, and now, three years later, a new HSEC is being formed. The previous HSEC was very active, meeting for an average of five hours on a monthly basis, and was a "powerful" support for the head. It was seen by some, and resented by others, as a proxy for the board. The new HSEC chair will be appointed, in consultation with the Board, by the Committee on Trustees. The Board president will serve as a member of the HSEC, and together with the head of school and HSEC chair, will appoint no more than two additional members. The Board is currently made up exclusively of parents. There is a need to educate the board about its role and how a board functions.

In *School G* the HSEC, chosen by the HOS and Board chair, is the same as the executive committee of the Board. The HSEC is made up of the Board chair, the treasurer, the HSEC chair (also a board member and a psychologist with a background in coaching) and the vice chair of board. The committee is very comfortable with the composition and felt they picked the people they thought would be right for the committee and coincidentally the members all turned out to be on the board. The HSEC chair did express that he would have liked to have had more people on the committee. If they find additional people with the right skills, they'd be happy to have them join the HSEC.

Additionally, *School G* is dealing with difficulty due to a divide among the board into two separate groups that push different agendas. The newer members, mostly business-minded professionals, seem to be pushing potential budget cuts rather than realizing that a strong focus should be on the relationships that are part of the school community. This latter focus, of building and sustaining relationships, is desired by the HOS and the more veteran board members. The board recently had a training which began to address this issue, but did not get to do so fully.

School H's HSEC is comprised of the Board president, two past-presidents, the treasurer (who is the possible next president), and the vice president for finance. They have proven very helpful and have experience in various areas (business, faculty relations, and managing organizations) that can provide support and also deal

with operational and strategic issues. Most of the committee members are veterans of the committee. The committee meets every three to four weeks. The HOS recognizes the wisdom and help available on this committee, but in regards to dealing with staffing issues, the HOS did not feel appropriately supported, possibly due to the makeup of the HSEC. Are these the right people to support the HOS?

School I proposed two documents for HOS evaluation, one put forth by the HSEC and the other by the HOS. It is unclear what the source of the school's inability to come to agreement on how HOS evaluation should work, but one possible factor may be the composition of the HSEC. If there were greater mutual trust between the HOS and each HSEC member, would they have been able to resolve this issue more easily?

The HSEC in *School J* is comprised of four people: the Board chair, a former teacher of the HOS, a parent of a friend of the HOS and the person who brought the HOS to the school. The HOS feels comfortable with the composition of the HSEC, though he felt it would be a good idea to expand to at least include someone with a financial background on the HSEC to assist with school financial issues.

Key comments and questions that emerged from the conversation about these schools include:

- **School and Board readiness/capacity:** Timing seems to play an important role in the effectiveness of the HSEC. Often, a school poised for change (a new strategic plan) recognizes that the HSEC is a key part of that change. Alternatively, the adoption of a strategic plan may be an indicator that a board is relatively high functioning, and that strong governance capacity may also translate into readiness to establish head support and evaluation as a systematic board function. In any event, examining the structure of the HSEC seems to go hand in hand with strategic planning.
- **Role of head in selecting members:** In many cases, the head of school has a voice in selecting the members of the HSEC. This helps create an atmosphere of trust and openness that can lead to effective support and evaluation. If the head does not trust each of the committee members, s/he might be guarded and not receive the full benefit of the process.
- **Selection process:** How do you make sure you have the right people on the committee at the right time? When is it appropriate for changes to be made? What role should changing realities and goals play in the committee's composition? For example, does a school with a new head need a different committee from the same school with an experienced head? A successful head vs. a struggling head? A stable board vs. a changing board? A strategic board vs. a reactive board? Economic distress vs. financial stability? High parent and faculty confidence vs. low parent and faculty confidence? How do we factor in things like personality matches? Is the model sustainable, or will it tend to change with a new head of school or new HSEC chair (or member)?
- **Induction:** It is important that the committee be educated about its purpose, background, goals and objectives. The board must also clearly understand the committee's role in order for it to be effective.
- **The HOS-HSEC chair relationship:** The key relationship within the HSEC is that of the HOS and the chair of the committee. When this relationship is strong, it can sometimes compensate for other weaknesses in the composition or functioning of the HSEC. Therefore, particular care needs to be taken, prior to confirming the appointment of the HSEC chair, to ensure that s/he and the HOS enjoy a fully trusting relationship.

Theme five : Individual vs. Institution – Strategic Goals and Human Resources

In theory, the needs and goals of the Head of School align neatly with those of the school. In practice, however, various tensions tend to surface when the needs of the individual do not coincide with the needs of the institution. These tensions are often present in the work of the Head Support and Evaluation Committee. Its underlying theory of action is predicated on the assumption that promoting the head's professional growth will benefit the school, but the relationship between the head's objectives and the school's priorities is not always self-evident. Further, the committee's support function promotes processes that tend to privilege the head as its primary client and beneficiary, while its evaluation function gives rise to processes in which the needs of the Board and the school community are primary. As well, the head's emotional needs, arising from working with the HSEC, the Board, or the wider school community, may work at cross purposes with the school's, or the Board's, interest. Finally, the committee's mandate, and its work, may not take into account nuances of personalities and personal feelings that affect how its goals are attained. The HSEC's role in bridging the potential gap between the individual and the institution needs to be thought through with great care.

This dilemma manifested itself in several ways:

In *School A*, the HSEC's charge was to evaluate the head of school in relation to four institutional priorities: fiscal, personnel, and operational management; leadership; communication; and curriculum/instruction. However, the committee members quickly realized that they did not know enough about the head's overall role and responsibilities to fulfill their role effectively. As a result, they interviewed the head to develop a more comprehensive appreciation of all aspects of her job, including those that went beyond the specific institutional priorities they had been asked to monitor.

School B took into consideration its strategic goals in defining the HSEC's composition, responsibilities, and procedures. However, when the head of school found himself in an uncomfortable position, not knowing if his contract would be renewed, tensions emerged surrounding this uncertainty and caused a shift away from the priorities that had originally been set. Instead of

working towards the common strategic goals, the head of school and members of the HSEC, as well as the Board Chair, focused more on the personnel issue that had come to the fore.

In *School C*, the Board chair and head of school jointly develop and agree upon the head's goals for the upcoming year. In this way, presumably, each party's goals are represented and there is confluence among them. The potential difficulty arises because the HSEC is charged with ultimately evaluating the head of school's progress against the stated goals, and reporting to the board. How can the interests of the individual (head of school) be protected while the serving the interests of the institution?

In *School D*, the HSEC was created in response to a request from the head of school for opportunities for his own professional development and growth. At the same time, once the committee began its work, the Board felt it necessary to evaluate the head of school's performance, in part to answer the question, "Are the challenges the school faces because of, or in spite of, the head of school?" In addition, the head of school struggles with the question, "How safe can I feel in a context in which I am being evaluated?"

In *School I*, the HSEC and the head of school have struggled to reach consensus on the goals and functions on which the head is going to be evaluated. The HSEC believes that, since the head is responsible for the overall management and supervision of the school program, his evaluation should gather data and provide feedback on his performance as a whole. The head believes that he and the HSEC should identify 3-5 goals that relate to the school's strategic direction as determined by the board, and he should be evaluated on his achievement of these goals.

School J has a relatively new head of school, and the HSEC is working through a new evaluation process. The HSEC has previously used an evaluation tool which focused on job description, but they felt it left out supporting the HOS. The school is now trying a new model which evaluates the HOS based on goals rather than responsibilities. The HSEC would like to find a balance between this new model focused on goals and still be able to evaluate whether the HOS is meeting all the responsibilities of his job description, too.

Key comments and questions that emerged from the conversation about these schools include:

- **Conflicting loyalties:** In several cases, members of the HSEC were torn between their two constituencies – the head of school and the institution. Though the committee tried to be a bridge between the head and the Board, it was not clear to the members of the committee how to mediate between its roles – for example, which loyalty should take priority in a particular situation.
- **Checking in:** It was suggested that, at a predetermined point in the year, the school engage in the following activity: The head of school writes down his/her professional opinion about what are the most important goals, and the lay leaders (HSEC chair, HSEC members, and/or Board chair) do the same. In this way, the players can affirm where there is alignment and begin a discussion over where there is disagreement. Surfacing the issue can help alleviate potential miscommunication.
- **Setting priorities:** Along with clear communication, it is helpful when the school's priorities are explicitly stated. In many instances the head of school is responsible for many spheres, and it should be clear to everyone how the head should prioritize those duties. Among all the tasks, which take precedence over others? With limited time and other resources, what should the focus be? How can the school use its own strategic plan and/or mission statement to determine the areas of import? How should the school as a whole respond when "reality" (e.g., a change in the economic climate) creates a need for the goals to be changed in mid-course?
- **Focusing on goals vs. the job description:** The head of school is responsible for the school's operations in their entirety, but trying to work on everything won't give the head much opportunity to focus on key areas for improvement and professional growth. On the other hand, limiting the HSEC's purview to a few goals often does not provide sufficient assurance to the board that the head is being held accountable for successfully performing his/her job. Deciding whether, or to what extent, to focus on a few goals, or instead on the large number of items in the head's job description, i.e., whether to privilege professional growth for the head or accountability for the board (and the school community as a whole) is likely to have a profound influence on the process and the outcomes.
- **Human subjectivity:** All professional and lay leaders are human, with individual strengths, weaknesses, and biases. In several instances, participants wondered about the potential for personal agendas to interfere with the functioning of the school. Ideas for avoiding such situations include: careful selection of HSEC members, induction and education of HSEC members, and clarity of roles and expectations for head of school as well as Board leaders.
- **A good "match":** Participants raised the question, "Are the personalities of the head of school and HSEC or Board chair a determining factor in the success of the head and of the school?" Should they be similar? Should they complement each other? Must they have similar communication skills? Leadership styles? Ideally they have developed a relationship of openness and trust – what might happen if one of the people changes roles?

Theme six : Transition, Change, and Crisis

The Head Support and Evaluation Committee is built to function effectively under a variety of conditions: in times of stability and continuity, as well as in times of transition, change, and crisis. However, the HSEC needs to think flexibly about ways it may need to adapt to challenging situations, while still fulfilling its dual mission of strengthening the Head of School's ability to do the job well and providing assurance and confidence to the Board that the school is being led skillfully and with vision.

The impact of challenging conditions on the work of the HSEC manifested itself in several ways:

School F is dealing with significant attrition for the first time. The HOS is therefore working on the considerable operational challenges of filling and funding the school. The HSEC struggles with how to support the HOS from a strategic perspective, when the HOS is dealing with critical operational issues. For example, what is the HSEC's role in protecting the HOS and other staff, such as the admissions director, from well-intentioned interference by board members? During the attrition crisis, when meetings and support were scheduled at regular intervals, the HSEC was a helpful sounding board, and the HOS felt supported by it.

For *School G*, change has recently occurred in Board composition, among the school leadership, in enrollment, and in various other aspects of the school. Additionally, the previous HOS was not a full-time HOS, and systems and policies for support and evaluation, among other things, were not put into place during his tenure. These changes are raising issues of how to draw the lines between the board's function and the HOS function.

As a result of the financial crisis, the HOS of *School H* has had to lay teachers off, which she accomplished successfully. The HSEC is now pushing the HOS to let go of additional people, seemingly without recognizing the difficulty the HOS has in doing so, and without considering whether an alternative to not rehiring administrators might achieve the necessary savings with less wear and tear on the HOS and the school as a whole.

School I has experienced financial setbacks and enrollment decline on account of the financial crisis and the HOS has made a number of necessary but unpopular decisions, including salary reductions. The HSEC has proposed an evaluation process

in which committee members would interview the HOS's supervisees. The HOS has expressed concern that this evaluation method, at this particular time, might unintentionally produce institutional instability. He is also looking to the HSEC to help him feel less vulnerable, not more.

Key comments and questions that emerged from the conversation about these schools include:

- **Clarity and communication in crisis:** Clear communication and shared understanding – about roles, relationships, processes, and priorities – are key to the success of the HSEC at all times, but in the midst of change or a crisis, they are absolutely indispensable. At such times, misperceptions are more likely, and the consequences of getting it wrong are heavier, and harder to fix.
- **Support vs., evaluation in crisis:** In challenging or uncertain times, the nature of support that the Head of School needs, the feedback s/he receives, and the balance between them are different from at other times. For example, the HOS needs help from the HSEC, often urgently, to figure out how best to respond to a crisis. At the same time, the Board needs greater assurance than usual that the school is in good hands, and the measures of success used to evaluate the HOS may be different, as well. Which is more important: for the HSEC to simply be supportive during a crisis, or to use the unusual circumstances as another aspect for scrutiny of the HOS, namely managing crisis?
- **Newness in Heads of School or HSECs:** A beginning HOS's professional challenges and learning trajectory differ from those of a more experienced HOS, and the purpose and process of their evaluation and support differ, as well. When a HOS is still an emerging leader, s/he needs to be helped to understand the range of competencies required for effective headship and their indicators, and supported in reflecting on his/her work. On the other hand, an established HOS benefits from opportunities to identify many of his/her own challenges and professional development priorities, while at the same time receiving help from the HSEC to understand the school's needs and pressure to move outside his/her comfort zone to address these.

HSECs, too, have different characteristics and needs when they are new and first learning their responsibilities and work, from when they are established and well functioning. These variations affect their ability to accomplish their own work and to help the HOS in his/her job. Different types of training and education may be needed for the development of beginning HSECs than for those that are more established and mature.

- **The HOS as change agent:** Every school has its own internal challenges, and sometimes the hiring of a new HOS is seen as an opportunity to charge the new HOS, either explicitly or implicitly, with making some hard choices and implementing what will be unpopular decisions. The HSEC needs, first, to understand the risks the HOS is taking to effect change for the school, and then provide necessary support, and sometimes adjust the evaluation process, so as to help the HOS feel safe.
- **The limits of accountability:** In challenging times, for example, when a school is experiencing enrollment decline or budgetary deficit, HSECs and Boards are often tempted to hold their Heads of School accountable not only for taking effective leadership action, but also for achieving certain outcomes. On the one hand, particular outcomes are strongly influenced by outside factors beyond the HOS's control, and it is unfair to judge his/her performance on that basis. On the other hand, unless a HOS is successful in reaching outcome targets, whatever other actions the HOS takes may not matter, if failure to achieve outcomes results in the closing of the school.

Chalk Talk

Chalk Talk is a silent way to do reflection, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group—students, faculty, workshop participants, committees. Because it is done completely in silence, it gives groups a change of pace and encourages thoughtful contemplation. It can be an unforgettable experience. Middle Level students absolutely love it—it’s the quietest they’ll ever be!

FORMAT

Time: Varies according to need; can be from 5 minutes to an hour.

Materials: Chalk board and chalk or paper roll on the wall and markers.

Process

1. The facilitator explains *VERY BRIEFLY* that chalk talk is a silent activity. No one may talk at all and anyone may add to the chalk talk as they please. You can comment on other people’s ideas simply by drawing a connecting line to the comment. It can also be very effective to say nothing at all except to put finger to lips in a gesture of silence and simply begin with #2.
2. The facilitator writes a relevant question in a circle on the board.

Sample questions:

- What did you learn today?
- So What? or Now What?
- What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?
- How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in community?
- How can we keep the noise level down in this room?
- What do you want to tell the scheduling committee?
- What do you know about Croatia?
- How are decimals used in the world?

3. The facilitator either hands a piece of chalk to everyone, or places many pieces of chalk at the board and hands several pieces to people at random.

4. People write as they feel moved. There are likely to be long silences—that is natural, so allow plenty of wait time before deciding it is over.

5. How the facilitator chooses to interact with the Chalk Talk influences its outcome. The facilitator can stand back and let it unfold or expand thinking by:

- circling other interesting ideas, thereby inviting comments to broaden
- writing questions about a participant comment
- adding his/her own reflections or ideas
- connecting two interesting ideas/comments together with a line and adding a question mark.

Actively interacting invites participants to do the same kinds of expansions. A Chalk Talk can be an uncomplicated silent reflection or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It has been known to solve vexing problems, surprise everyone with how much is collectively known about something, get an entire project planned, or give a committee everything it needs to know without any verbal sparring.

6. When it’s done, it’s done.

Gallery Walk : *Adapted from Student Work Gallery by Gene Thompson-Grove.*

1. The Gallery Walk has two purposes:
 - To help a group become familiar with the work of a number of participant groups, to become aware of what participants value, and/or to become aware of what participants are concerned about.
 - To give every group at least some feedback, when there is too much work to give all of it an in-depth look using a protocol.
2. Encourage people to respond to as many of the displays as possible, but ask them to also notice whose work has questions on it, and to be sure to distribute the group's responses among the pieces of work as evenly as possible.
3. Be sure to set people up well. Ask them not to make judgmental statements or to evaluate the work in any way. Ask them to be interested and curious. Ask them to look for strengths, for what the group that made the work knows.

The comments should be in the form of questions, and the questions should come from wondering, from observing and noticing, from a place of curiosity. It is possible to veil criticism and judgment behind "I wonder" statements, but at least it is a little harder. The Gallery is also good practice for being more interested and curious, as opposed to being judgmental and evaluative. Many participants say that having to ask questions helps them to uncover their own assumptions and biases.
4. Set a time limit, as it can become compelling enough to take up a good deal of time. Thirty minutes is usually enough time to have quite a few good comments attached to all the work (on post-its), to do some reflective writing, and to debrief — and still have the energy and focus needed to do an in-depth exploration with a protocol.
5. It is important for everyone to have time to read the comments put on the work they contributed to and to debrief with at least a couple of other people. Leave time for 10 minutes of debriefing around the comments made — if it is a large group, break into groups of 5 or 6 and have each participant talk about how the comments felt — what they learned, what disturbed them, etc.
6. The Process
 - a. Set up the gallery; participants respond to the work: What warm feedback ("This resonates with me") or questions ("I wonder about this") do you have for the participants who prepared this work?
 - b. Reflective Writing: What does looking at this work make me think about my practice?
 - c. Debrief, both in smaller groups (about the questions on the post-it notes) and as a large group (about the process of the gallery and about the insights people had as part of their journal writing).