

Leading Together: Thriving Within the Critical Relationship Between Board Chair and Head of School – David Chojnacki and Rick Detwiler

The strongest relationship and team across the school must be between board chair and head of school. On the initiative of the Office of Overseas Schools, NESAs, AISAs and AAIEs are collaborating to support research and the development of a leadership curriculum to support school heads, assistant heads and board chairs.

The preconference will focus on nine leadership criteria borne out of research into practice, that predict productive and successful work between school head and board chair. The discussion will begin with ideas about building and sustaining trusting and productive relationships, based on the school's founding documents, candid communication and developing a positive board culture. How each player complements respected roles and responsibilities, staying in the right lanes through distinguishing policy from procedure and being strategic thinkers together are key focus areas of inquiry and discussion.

Leading together, the chair and head of school promote best practice with oversight functions and using exemplary board practices and operational agreements to ensure collaboration between board and the school's senior leaders.

Surrounding it all is the need to ensure crystal clear communication and that every board member is committed to their own learning in support of the day-to-day and preferred future of the school.

Consider that as school heads, we may be our own worst enemy in not focusing the best leadership skills, attitudes and dispositions on leading together with our board chair and trustees. This session will go deep into setting the conditions for ensuring a positive and productive board culture through creation of the strongest team in the school, that between head of school and board chair.



David Chojnacki has held headships at the International School of Ouagadougou, the Karachi American School, the American Embassy School in New Delhi, and Cairo American College. For 20 years, he served as the Executive Director of NESAs, and he has served on numerous boards including AISAs, AAIEs, NAIS, and the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Greece.

Rick Detwiler has worked with school boards as head of five international schools over the past 25 years. He is a consultant on governance and boardmanship; consultant to NESAs on its Board Development Project.

