

What Your Colleagues Are Reading

The Way to Pancho's Kitchen: A Trail Guide for Small School Leaders

by Stuart Grauer

Storytelling is gaining traction in the business and sales world, yet it remains undervalued in education. We often look to formal research for theory and solutions, but some of education's most powerful truths emerge from the stories we are willing to tell, and willing to hear.

In *The Way to Pancho's Kitchen*, Stuart Grauer tells the stories of small school founders. Though their settings and circumstances differ, the lessons in leadership, vision, and resilience are all there.

Grauer captures what it takes to build a legacy from the ground up: the excitement, vision, and possibility, but also the financial strain, self-doubt, fractured relationships, and the quiet pressure to insist that "everything is fine" even when it feels like everything has been lost. He writes about those challenges with honesty, wisdom, and a kind of support that feels timeless.

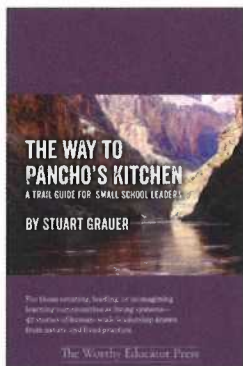
The book is also a reminder that the human dimension of school leadership is not separate from the work; it is the work. In an age of AI, nothing can replace the relationships at the heart of learning.

Small school founders will come away encouraged, that their work matters for every future.

Angela Fubler

Founder

Chatmore British International School (Bermuda)



Free-Range Kids: How Parents and Teachers Can Let Go and Let Grow

by Lenore Skenazy

I was inspired to read Lenore Skenazy's *Free-Range Kids* after finishing Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*, which highlights the authors' collaboration on the Let Grow program, an initiative designed to build childhood resilience. The 2021 edition expands on themes of technology, anxiety, and the importance of downtime.

Describing herself as "part helicopter on my mom's side," Skenazy uses humor to challenge today's culture of "extravagant worry." Drawing on crime statistics to dismantle common safety concerns, she argues that many parental fears are misplaced. While children are safer today than they were in the 1990s, American parenting has grown increasingly protective. Globally, most children walk to school; in the United States, only one in 10 does.

Skenazy makes a compelling case for unstructured play, arguing that it's as essential to healthy development as love, sunshine, and broccoli. When children play without adult supervision, they invent games, negotiate rules, and solve problems on their own. In the process, they build confidence, resilience, and social skills that structured activities often cannot replicate.

To foster independence, Skenazy urges parents to give children meaningful responsibilities, from walking the dog and babysitting to buying groceries and preparing meals. As she memorably writes, "All the fear in the world doesn't prevent death. It prevents life."

She also encourages parents to let children make mistakes and experience the consequences. Delivering forgotten homework or laptops to school, for example, may spare children temporary discomfort but deprives them of valuable learning opportunities. Children's minds, Skenazy argues, grow stronger through authentic challenges.

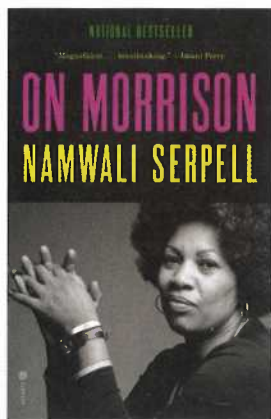
Ultimately, children mature through responsibility, not rescue. *Free-Range Kids* challenges parents and educators alike to prepare children for adulthood rather than protect them from it.

Elaine Griffin

Head of Middle School

University School of Milwaukee (WI)





On Morrison

by Namwali Serpell

In the opening pages of *On Morrison*, Namwali Serpell invokes a 1974 photograph of Toni Morrison dancing at a party. Morrison's dancing, Serpell writes, is "neither delicate nor decorous" but "a wild, loose engagement with others," embodying the tension between "liberty and rigor" that Serpell hopes to achieve with her own readers.

On Morrison is about Morrison's writing (its deliberate difficulty, its subversive power, the torturous beauty), yet it equally captures the very essence of Morrison the reader. As such, this book is really a lesson in how to read.

In discussing *The Bluest Eye*, Serpell zeroes in on Morrison's use of "negation," encouraging readers to find meaning in what is missing, to closely read what isn't

on the page. In *Beloved*, she explores how the illiteracy of several characters reflects both the power of enslavers and the limits of language itself in conveying slavery's horrors. Read what is there, Serpell reminds us, but pay even closer attention to what is left unsaid.

As an English teacher who relishes every opportunity to read Morrison with students, I expect *On Morrison* to become required reading in my classroom. Morrison's literary presence looms large, but Serpell illuminates the reading practices that make such work possible, offering a profound reminder that reading is vital to the sense of wonder and the desire to be challenged that is part of our shared humanity.

Jessica Bremmer

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What Your Colleagues Are Writing

Some of the most valuable books for educators are written by those who know schools from the inside. In these titles, former independent school leaders explore teaching, leadership, identity, technology, student well-being, and governance.

- ***Identity-Conscious Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum: Strategies and Activities for Inclusive Classrooms (2026)*** by Liza Talusan, most recently at The Park School (MA)
- ***The Silent Rebellion: Becoming a Modern Leader (2024)*** by Inez Robinson-Odom, most recently at La Jolla Country Day (CA) and Chris Lewis
- ***Teach for Authentic Engagement (2023)*** by Lauren Porosoff, most recently at Ethical Culture Fieldston School (NY)
- ***Middle School Superpowers: Raising Resilient Tweens in Turbulent Times (2023)*** by Phyllis L. Fagell, most recently at Sheridan School (DC)
- ***Literacy Is Liberation: Working Toward Justice Through Culturally Relevant Teaching (2022)*** by Kimberly N. Parker, most recently at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (MA)
- ***Tech With Heart: Leveraging Technology to Empower Student Voice, Ease Anxiety, and Create Compassionate Classrooms (2019)*** by Stacey Roshan, most recently at Bullis School (MD)



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If you've written or discovered a new book that can help school leaders think differently, we'd love to hear about it. Share your recommendations with us at ismag@nais.org for possible inclusion in a future issue.