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WHY WE WILL HAVE FAILED THEM: HOW TO REGAIN FACULTY TRUST

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In response to the pandemic, some schools are furloughing teachers, freezing pay increases, reducing benefits, and in some cases cutting salaries. At the same time, schools are expecting older, more vulnerable teachers to feel safe returning to campus and/or living in dorms and assuming that all teachers will once again engage effectively and loyally in distance learning exclusively or in combination with classroom teaching. Those who teach the very youngest students are feeling the most challenged in their ability to deliver a quality program. Teachers have voiced anxieties, fears, insecurities and a reduction of trust in boards and in their own leaders. We have heard these sentiments worldwide.

Heads need a plan to re-engage all staff, but particularly teachers who interface with students the most. How to do that? How will faculty be made to feel valued, heard, and needed once again? How will we reward them for their patience, perseverance and dedication other than with expressions of appreciation?

More than ever, it is time for all schools to engage in an organized and serious review of how they pay teachers, not just how much, but how that money is delivered. Is it delivered in a mission appropriate fashion? Is it paid out fairly, transparently, and in a way so that teachers can expect both a degree of predictability of future earning power and know HOW to influence their own future earning power?

What are your School's goals for your salary system outcomes? What is your philosophy of compensation? What will your School attempt to reward?

Quality of teaching?

Workload?

Advanced degrees?

Attitude?

Leadership?

Professional Growth and Learning?

Longevity?



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Mentoring of fellow teachers?

Pastoral care of students?

Innovation in teaching?

Going the extra mile?

Supporting the mission?

All teachers care about how they are paid almost as much as how much they are paid. They want to know the rules of the road i.e., how to benefit their families, how to save, how to get ahead, educate their children, and advance to a leadership position if they so desire. What does a school's salary system do to show them that pathway and what does it signal about the kind of teachers a school wants and frankly, does not want?

Parents may not be willing to pay a highly competitive tuition if schools have to revert to distance learning or a combination of remote and classroom teaching for any significant length of time. Creativity in teaching approaches should be highly prized. Generally, we have valued excellent teachers by promoting teachers to administrative positions and removing them from the classroom in order to retain and motivate them and pay them more. What is wrong with paying your strongest teachers as much or more than your division heads? Why do we not incent teachers to remain in the classroom? Why do we not structure the benefit package in a way that takes into account teachers' goals at various stages of their careers such as needing more cash for a down payment on a home, providing for educational opportunities for children, building a retirement asset or ensuring the health and safety of the teachers and perhaps their families as well. In other words, why are we not creating salary and benefit systems that reinforce the mission and how we recruit, hire, reward, maintain and professionally grow those whom most fit the mission?

Boards have only three jobs: hiring and evaluating the head, fiscal oversight and mission integrity. Eighty-five percent of most independent school budgets is spent on salaries and benefits and yet most board members, even the finance chair, cannot describe the benefit package or how the salary system works. This is a major lack of board oversight. Board members should not know or set any individual salaries other than that of the Head, but they should understand how the talent recruitment, retention and evaluation processes function.

How will we take this crisis and turn it into an opportunity to redesign outmoded salary and benefit systems?

Teachers need a voice, an appropriate voice. When they return to a more normal school routine, they should be involved in a discussion about, and design of, mission based salary, benefit and evaluation systems. However, this should occur in concert with senior administrators and a cross section of the board in a process that allows the time, the boundaries, and the guidance to help



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rebuild trust between board, administration and faculty. It should also result in a far more efficient, mission based and fair compensation structure. Teachers have a right to expect this but so do board members.

Littleford & Associates has assisted almost 2500 schools worldwide with such a process since 1983 when NAIS published the ground breaking book by John Littleford and Valerie Lee. Several other major associations sponsored the book for over 20 years.