

Board of Directors

A LEARNING BOARD IS A HEALTHY BOARD

BY JOSEPH HWANG, BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

We all need to keep learning, and to continue growing as professionals. It's why, as a school, we take professional development for our teachers, administrators, and other staff members so seriously.

And the same is true for our Board of Directors.

A highly effective Board is key to the health of a school. Being a member of the Board is a vitally important job. And so, just like any other job, being successful requires extensive, ongoing training, reflection, and development.

Fortunately, our Board recognizes that need and takes their own professional growth as seriously as they do that of our staff, faculty, and administrators.

That's why they recently spent three days working with John Littleford, arguably the top independent school board governance consultant in the world. Mr. Littleford, who started his consulting firm in 1994, spent 18 years as a head of school, 25 years as a teacher, and has also served as a board member and chair of both schools and other non-profits. It's no surprise, then, that Mr. Littleford now has hundreds of clients, including the best independent schools in the United States and around the world.

The Board's goal for their three days of workshops was to ensure their understanding of best practices for school boards, so that they could support the school in the best possible ways, and therefore help ensure students have the best possible experiences on campus.

To achieve that end, Mr. Littleford used the case study method to discuss common problems in school governance, and to therefore develop shared understandings of how the best boards add value to the experience of their

schools' students. That is why individuals serve on a school's board, after all: to serve both the students of today and those of tomorrow.

One of the key takeaways for the Board was the importance of taking the long-term view. Even though most members of our board are elected parents, they are chosen to represent the school as an institution. That's why so many schools refer to this group as a "board of trustees:" board members hold the school in trust, respecting the school's traditions while ensuring the best possible education for both current students and generations to come.

Their job is ultimately to ensure we are the same great school, not only for their children, but for their children's children, and even that generation's children as well.

As a result of their work with Mr. Littleford, the Board now has an even better understanding of their three jobs:

First, to hire, nurture and evaluate the Head of School. Second, to ensure the School's fiscal health. Third, to ensure the School remains mission driven.

That is, they know their job is to set the School's direction, and to ensure the Head of School is the right person, and has the resources she needs, to achieve those goals.

It's a challenging job. It's hard to set aside one's own personal interests when, as parents elected by the community, they have students of their own enrolled in the school. But we are fortunate to have a Board that gives generously of their time to ensure they do just that, to ensure their job is done well, including by making sure they get the training and professional development they need.

By relying on Mr. Littleford's expertise, the Board ensured they were in good hands. And that will help ensure that, by selecting this Board of Directors, Taipei American School is in good hands.

"A community is only as strong as each individual within it. So at the beginning of this school year, please, reach out to one another."



PHOTO: LINDSEY KUNDEL

他們說家就是心靈之所在，但當您的頭腦、心和家都不在同一個形體空間時，您會怎麼做？在每個新學年開始時，我們的社群歡迎新人進入我們心中最確定的家。然而，我們有時會疏忽地忘了許多尚未將台北美國學校刻入心扉的新來者，無論長幼，他們走在我們的走廊裡，在我們的教室裡學習，在我們的辦公室工作，並正在我們的社群中安頓下來。雖然我們知道這裡很快就會成為他們真正的家園，但我們也不應怕記得他們仍然可能認為其他地方是他們真正的家，至少目前如此。今年，當我們歡迎這些即將成為我們寶貴的陌生人時，我希望我們考慮一下歡迎的意義。迎接的社群對新來者的道德義務是什麼？

我承認，在閱讀了幾篇關於“歡迎陌生人”的經文後，我才開始思索這個問題。這可能是我的思緒開始的地方，但同樣的情緒在歷史和各種思想流派中無數次地呼應過。在舊約聖經中，猶太基督徒信仰認為：“當一個陌生人在你的土地上與你同住時，你不應該虧待他。你應該把陌生人當作你們中間的本地人對待，你們應該像愛自己般愛他，因為你們曾經也是此地的陌生人”（利未記19：33-34）。雖然這段經文實際上是為了教導以色列人不要壓迫外國人，但這個戒律仍持續著，然而只避免壓迫是不夠的：我們必須愛和歡迎這些被稱為“陌生人”的新人，如同愛與歡迎我們自己一樣。在這種情況下，我們被告知不僅僅是做某事；我們也被約束做壞事，並被要求積極做一些好事：愛這些需要被歡迎的新人加入我們的行列。今年或任何一年，被動是不夠的。

許多其他世界性的宗教和哲學都重複了這種以積極方式歡迎他人的想法。伊曼紐康德將好客視為在政治環境中將不同文化的人聚集在一起的決定性因素。對於康德而言，熱情好客是所有人擁有的“自然權利”，“憑藉他們共同擁有地球表面的權利。”康德認為，我們的新人，我們的陌生人，有權受到我們強烈的歡迎。因為他們是人，如果我們這些東道主拒絕恰當地歡迎他們，我們是否會因此否定他們自己的人性？

Jacques Derrida從一個略微不同的角度來看待熱情好客的想法。對他來說，不是人性需要受歡迎 - 而是事實上我們有一個共同的語言：“我們從來只說一種語言 - 因為它回歸到另一種語言，它不對稱的存在，總是為了他者，起自他者，由他者保持。來自他者，與他者留存，並回歸他者。”在台北美國學校，雖然我們知道在學校和家裡都有很多語言，我們分享兩種常用語言：英語和不太具體的語言，一種心和靈的習慣，多過一種字面的口語。我們在所有工作中都追求個人和學術上的卓越，這種語言是一座橋樑，可以克服我們在社群中可能遇到的具挑戰性的語言或文化障礙。文明、尊重、負責、仁慈，誠實和勇氣是我們在這個社群中的統一語言，我們以同理心和愛心彼此關懷。

在伊斯蘭思想中，好客的概念也很清楚。據報導，先知穆罕默德曾說過，“不好客的人沒益處。”在伊斯蘭教中，好客也是一種權利，而不是禮物，好客是主人、客人、上帝之間的三角關係。這三者都是必不可少的，這種關係有多種方式。在這種思想中，成為一個好

主人和一個好客人在道德上是必要的，因為我們在生活中的某些方面都會扮演兩個角色。因此，我們提供和接受好客的能力，成為衡量我們個人價值的一種方式。下次您在我們的走廊裡看到一個新朋友時想想這個！

我想給您留下的最後一句話是佛陀的一句話：“當照看自己，你照看著別人。而照看別人時，你正照看著自己。”我喜歡這句話，因為它讓我想起我們在這個世界所做的好事，會同樣償還給我們自己。當我們照顧自己的需求時，我們會幫助確保我們的社群能夠蓬勃發展。當我們照顧其他人時，我們也在幫助照顧好自己。但還有另一種方式來閱讀這句話 - 那就是當我們照顧自己或其他人時，這是同一回事，因為我們是一體。一個目標相同的社群。我們賦予任何其他人的好處與為自己做好事完全相同。那麼我們必須失去什麼？不會。您的歡迎不會對您造成壓力，也不會給您帶來負擔 - 它只會給您和我們共同的世界帶來更多好處。

一個社群只會與其中每個人同樣強大。所以在本學年開始時，請互相聯繫。鼓勵您的孩子有玩耍日並與新生們建立關係。而家長也一樣，請記住，您也是我們社群的一部分，您可以幫助本校的新進成人，就像我們的學生將在課堂上受到鼓勵一樣。雖然我們的許多學生一直在台北、台灣或亞洲居住，但並非所有學生都一直在我們的特定家庭中。請想一想那些離開他們的朋友、家人、寵物，並將他們帶入您自己的朋友和家人圈子。我們可能不會說同一種語言，但溫暖的微笑和歡迎可以在這個世界上創造奇蹟。

JOHN LITTLEFORD DEFINES INDEPENDENT SCHOOL EXCELLENCE

BY LINDSEY KUNDEL, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

In late August, TAS was fortunate to welcome back world-renowned independent school consultant Mr. John Littleford. Mr. Littleford, whose extensive client list includes many of the top independent and international schools in the world, has been visiting Taipei American School for over 27 years. This year he focused his presentation on the need to define “excellence” in the world of the great independent schools. Reminding his audience that while many public schools can be good, those who attend the finest independent schools have a myriad of advantages. He believes Taipei American School, given its history and its mission, combines the best of American independent schools, public schools, and international schools, and results in a unique definition of what an excellent independent school can and should look like.

Littleford is a firm believer in the power of independent schools, having attended both public and private schools as a student himself. The difference between the two types of schools, to him, is that truly great independent schools make students feel valued: “no matter how small you are, or how athletically poor you are, [they teach students] that you can do anything you set your mind to.” With missions that fuse academics, extra-curriculars, athletics, and character development in radically intentional ways, the schools he believes best serve students owe their greatness to the ability to make students feel valued, cared for, and recognized.

Another important part of his discussion of excellence rested on the need for

a school community to understand the mission of the School, be sure it is reflective of what the majority of families seek, and then take steps to support retaining institutional memory. To Littleford, great schools have both “long term leadership” and “consistency of mission,” and those two things are interrelated. When crucial positions of school leadership have little turnover, schools flourish due to the symbiotic energy among the leaders as they enact the school’s mission—one for present day community and one for the future generation of students. Citing years of research, he noted that when a school has to “constantly redefine the same issues,” it is inherently regressing and not progressing in its mission. Institutional memory, consistency and continuity of leadership, and strong administrative and Board partnerships are hallmarks of the more successful schools.

Lastly, Littleford suggested that an independent school can look to its teachers to figure out whether it meets his definition of excellence: “Did you ever have a teacher who made a positive and dramatic impact on your life?” Most people will answer yes to at least one teacher. It is the responsibility of those who recruit teachers to assure that every student will one day be able to say “Yes, I remember that teacher, and he or she made a big difference in my life.” If TAS is to continue to pursue excellence, always supporting and nurturing those memorable, impactful teachers is essential.

“Great schools are led by great leaders who hire great teachers, who have a magical ability to ask children to give every single bit of the God-given talent that they’ve inherited and grown up with, without asking more of them than they can possibly get. In other words, that delicate tightrope between saying I know you can do it, versus making them feel they can do it when they can’t, and thereby damaging their confidence for the rest of their lives. That delicate balance is what a great school is all about.” -John Littleford

Q&A

Q: *Who is John Littleford? Why does TAS keep inviting him back as a consultant and parent speaker?*

A: Mr. Littleford is the founder of Littleford & Associates, an international management consulting firm, specializing in advice for independent and international schools, colleges, and non-profit organizations. Prior to his career in educational consulting, Mr. Littleford served as Head of School for 18 years, a teacher for 25 years, and a board member and chair of schools and nonprofit agencies. According to a former independent school board chair and client, Mr. Littleford’s “caring, passion and enjoyment fill up a room and infect everyone in it.”

Mr. Littleford travels around the world, over 320 days per year to over 1700 different clients, because he strongly believes in the power of independent schools to support students.

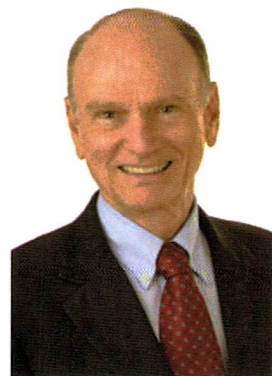




PHOTO: LINDSEY KUNDEL

學習中的董事會是健康的董事會

BY JOSEPH HWANG, BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

我們都需要不斷地學習，並持續在專業領域中成長。這就是為什麼作為一所學校，我們認真看待本校教師、行政主管和其他工作人員的專業發展。

本校董事會亦若是。

高效能的董事會是學校健康的關鍵。擔任董事會成員是一項至關重要的工作。因此，就像任何其他工作一樣，成功需要廣泛、持續的培訓、檢討和發展。

幸運的是，本校董事會認識到這種需求，並且像我們的教職員和行政主管一樣認真地看待自己的專業發展。

這就是為什麼他們最近花了三天時間與John Littleford一起工作，John Littleford可能是世界上最頂尖的獨立學校董事會治理顧問。Littleford先生於1994年創立了自己的諮詢公司，他擔任過18年的校長工作，任教了25年，並兼任董事會成員和學校及其他非營利組織的主席。因此，Littleford先生現在擁有數百名客戶，包括美國和世界上最好的獨立學校，這也就不足為奇

了。

為期三天的董事研習會的目標，是確保他們瞭解學校董事會的最佳實踐法，以便他們能夠以最好的方式支持學校，從而幫助確保學生在校園內獲得最佳體驗。

為實現此目標，Littleford先生運用案例研究的方法來討論學校治理中常見的問題，從而發展對最佳董事會如何為其學校的學生經驗加值之共同理解。畢竟，這就是為什麼個人會願意擔任學校董事一職：為今天和明天的學生服務。

董事會的關鍵點之一，即是眼光長遠的重要性。儘管本校董事會的大多數成員都由選舉產生的家長，但對一個機構而言，他們是被選中來代表學校的。這就是為什麼如此多的學校將這個群體稱為“受託人委員會”：董事會成員信任學校，尊重學校的傳統，同時也確保替當前和後代的學生留下最佳教育。

他們的工作，最終不僅是為了他們的孩子、他們孩子的孩子、甚至是那代孩子的孩子，來確

保我們一直是同一所優越的學校。

由於他們與Littleford先生的合作，董事會現在對他們的三項工作有了更深入的理解：

第一，聘請和評鑑校長。

第二，確保學校的財務健康。

第三，確保學校繼續推動剩下的任務。

也就是說，他們知道他們的工作是確定學校的方向；確保校長是合適的人，並擁有其所需的資源，以實現這些目標。

這是一項具有挑戰性的工作。當由社群選出家長，他們有自己的孩子在校就讀時，就很難放棄自己的個人利益。但我們很幸運地擁有一個董事會願慷慨地花時間來確保他們做到此點；確保自己做好工作，包括確保他們獲得所需的培訓和專業發展。

憑藉著Littleford先生的專業知識，董事會確定他們被能人好手照顧中。這將有助於保障藉由選擇這個董事會，而使台北美國學校也處於良好的狀態。