

## 1 VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONSTITUTION

- “About the Declaration, there is a finality that is exceedingly restful. It is often asserted that the world has made a great deal of progress since 1776, that we have had new thoughts and new experiences which have given us a great advance over the people of that day, and that we may therefore very well discard their conclusions for something more modern. But that reasoning can not be applied to this great charter. If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are all endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final. No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions. If anyone wishes to deny their truth or their soundness, the only direction in which he can proceed historically is not forward, but backward toward the time when there was no equality, no rights of the individual, no rule of the people. Those who wish to proceed in that direction can not lay claim to progress. They are reactionary. Their ideas are not more modern, but more ancient, than those of the Revolutionary fathers.”



I would like to begin with a Calvin Coolidge excerpt from his 1926 speech. You are part of a long tradition to create a public school system that can understand the importance of our governance and this particularly obvious definition of the significance of the Constitution.

## 2 MANY TYPES, ONE GOAL

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Every member of the people stranded on the island (a common goal) were unique and from different socio-economic sets, each had different skills and talents.

Everyone relied on each other for basic safety, food gathering, clothing maintenance and shelter.

Human dignity was extended, and they became a team bent on surviving first and looking for a way home second.

**School board members may come to resemble this if all are focused on student outcomes. All that is necessary is a common goal...**

**Even a single BOE member with that mindset can change things for the good of the students.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDXbuKPPgS8>

We owed it to each other

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There is a concerning element in society that was not mainstream even through the 80's but has become more common in the last 4 decades.

Somehow the golden rule, I.E. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", became "Do unto others before they can do unto you".

Mistrust and paranoia are rampant and require constant vigilance to stay clear of them due in large part to media access on the web, but this element manifested itself long before the internet.

Generations of people throughout our history overcame this

fear by staying focused and having confidence in our constitution and the willful delineation the rule of law provided.

They simply believed citizenship required them to take personal responsibility for their own behavior and others would do the same. We owed it to each other for the good of the “island” ...as on the Gilligan’s’ Isle Sitcom.

## 4 PUBLIC SERVICE IN A SPLIT WORLD

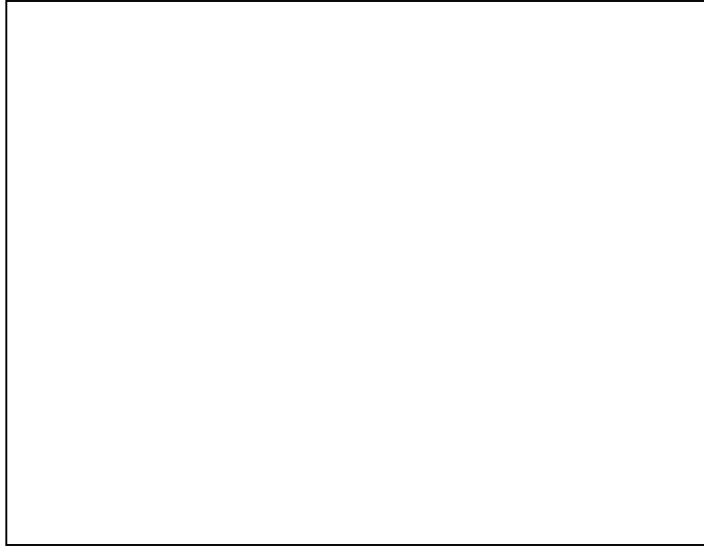
- A large part of public service is staying focused on the discussions and decisions they bring.
- A real challenge today is to not let feelings become part of the decision-making process.
- If you discern you are in the minority on a topic, particularly if the other side is displaying that they think it is a moral issue, a very good strategy is to move to actions that embrace common areas with the people opposite on the topic.



Think through your experiences in life and find a task in business or personally in an area of your strength when you persevered because you knew the chance of a positive outcome loomed when others did not see it. Ultimately you were right, and the thing was a howling success. This buoyed your confidence and belief in your skill or knowledge.

### **What should I do differently because of my own bias?**

We live in a society split 50/50 philosophically that sways vehemently when one party or the other carries an election. Many fears and personal beliefs are espoused as fact and personal effort and cohesive effort seems to wane. If you consider that Friere had considerably more at risk (perhaps even life itself) for forwarding his educational methods...we do have many good choices, we can make.



Hard to argue with logic like that!

When education curricula is not well received conceitization principles may help involve all parties

## 6 ABOUT PAULO FRIERE,

This man's' Brazilian professional world collapsed in 1964, after a military coup in his homeland. He was the Superintendent of instruction for Sao Paulo Brazil schools. He was jailed as a subversive and upon his release spent 15 years in exile. Brazil stayed under military rule for two decades -- during which the Government banned his theories on education.

The two sides must listen and show understanding if not compassion for each other. That may require someone to go first!



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During his exile, his ideas came to be better known outside Brazil. He was received with respect at an International

Symposium for Literacy, where he observed in a paper, "It is not systematic education which somehow molds society, but, on the contrary, society which, according to its particular structure, shapes education in relation to the ends and interests of those who control the power in that society."

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## 7 LOOK FOR TEAM EXPERIENCE AND ASSETS



Now apply that to any decision-making process but from the other person's side. Consider Marianne and Ginger, they did not know what the professor, knew but boldly went forward knowing someone on the "island" had considered it from a position of experience. You can now explore both sides of an issue even if you are not knowledgeable of it and look for common ground and hear the other person objectively.

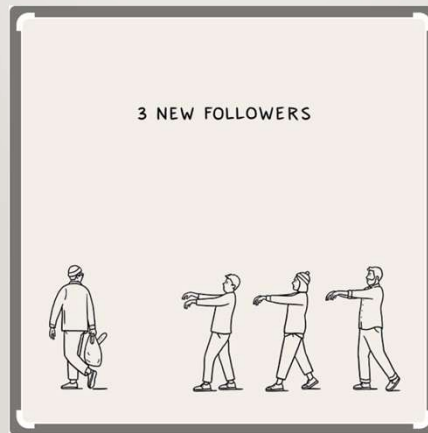
## 8 YOU CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY THAN VINEGAR.

- Ask objective questions but know the answer!



These kinds of linkage between BOE members take time. Even though I was typically on the wrong side of a 5-2 or 4-3 voting stance on the board where I served, even the most staunch of the 5 would turn to me in open meetings and request my comment on purchasing a certain kind of school bus or a technical topic on equipment or maintenance because they knew my background and trusted my understanding. They also trusted my non adversarial nature. That is a foundational relationship.

## 9 IF IT IS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, IT HAS TO BE TRUE RIGHT?



About the web, I can trace two issues with fellow BOE members to comments of positions I took innocently and with no malice or linkage to them...and they just didn't approve. In my undergraduate work towards obtaining a teaching degree and licensure, we were always told that when we entered a classroom, we had to make it a secure environment for every student. That meant I had to be myself but without alienating anyone with my beliefs. *If there was a doubt there, we were taught we had to err on behalf of the student and keep our divisive behavior and comments out of the classroom.* Student outcomes were the most important thing not the teachers' pet thought process. This served me very well and did not inhibit the classroom etiquette or my ability to develop mentoring relationships with the students

enrolled in my classes. The classes were always full, and no bias was shown. The objectivity in the classroom was evidenced making discipline easy to maintain and humor\* and trust did abound. The next teacher that followed me when I left met students that expected good things happening and trust was foundational. The program has thrived for 27 years under that the next teachers watch. Before I worked there, the school system had 5 shop teachers in seven years. Two in 33 years sounds better.

## Personal experiences

\*Charles was a nontraditional shop student, a great bookworm and thinker but we were introducing him to working with his hands. I had come to really appreciate his wit and demeanor. He was in a one-hour Intro to Automotive Information class which was extremely popular with 16- and 17-year-olds that saw vehicles as the key to the liberty they sought with their entire being! I had my desk at the side midway down 4 rows of student desks. I wanted the focus to be on material and not like I was watching all the time. He sat directly at the end of a row in line with my desk and was taking a test in the calm classroom with his classmates. This was mid-year, and the class was in autopilot mode as described earlier. As he worked, I noticed he was using a pen with a bikini clad female on it. At times when he was thinking

he would move his writing hand to his head as if thinking about how to answer the question. I noticed in those moments of reflection when the pen was inverted, the image on the pens' bikini drained off. "Charles, what kind of pen are you using?" I inquired so everyone could hear. Immediately he exclaimed as if he was expecting the question. "Oh Mr. Merritt, you can't take my pen, it was my grandfathers, and it is all I have to remember him by!" His classmates roared as if they appreciated the draining test day tension in the room. I smiled and said he could pick up his legacy in the office after school.

A boe member came to me an hour early before a board meeting to discuss giving the superintendent a raise. As I looked at the financials, he was proposing I noticed he had each of the other 5 boe members written in the corner of his buckslip. I asked if he was checking off all of us that agreed to vote on his proposal? He said yes. I informed him that was a serial meeting violation of KOMA. He said, "No matter, a first offense is 500 bucks if we get caught and I will pay it." He felt the ends justified the illegal means to obtain them.

As president of a local teachers' association, the boe president came to my classroom unannounced just after students left for the day. He initiated a discussion about what the boe wanted to offer the teachers for a pay raise to bypass normal negotiations. He felt if he talked to me and I agreed, we could just decide what to do without bringing anyone into the discussion. If you are thinking that this generation has just gone way to far...This was in the late 80's basically two generations back. Visualize the best but be ready to offer a kind response.

## 11 "YOU GOT TO BE CAREFUL IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING, BECAUSE YOU MIGHT NOT GET THERE." - YOGI BERRA

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- ✓ The Building Needs Assessment (BNA) exercise may be the most important oversight responsibility for every school board.
- ✓ Basis for a strategic plan to improve outcomes, academically prepare students for life.
- ✓ Strategic plans that don't address the BNA questions will not get students the education they deserve.



Administrators many times set the agenda for BOE members. The state test scores at the 3rd thru 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grades are going to illuminate what to focus on as you build the building needs assessment.

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### What can we do?

- Progress reports from at least one elementary, middle school, and high school principal at each board meeting.
- What are we doing differently, and why?
- How are we measuring progress?
- Student and staff reactions.

- ❖ Progress reports get everyone to thinking about “my day is coming” and they will listen to how your report resonates.
- ❖ No change typically means no results.
- ❖ Is the measurement still accurate?
- ❖ Student and staff reactions can gauge an immediate response or need.





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*Being consistent about what you believe is important.*

How can parents and community leaders help?

- ✓ Educate the community; civic clubs, chamber of commerce with your consistent message.
- ✓ Emphasize the key principle. Improving outcomes is #1 priority.
- ✓ That means nothing gets in the way...not DEI, extracurriculars, or existing management structure.



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- School board members that focus on Student Outcomes will notice the best part of the education process. Teachers that love seeing the light come on as students learn will attest to the resiliency, they experience from being on the front line with the learners. My experience as both a former teacher and school board member is the same. The jobs can be a grind but the adults that focus on seeing students excel and get better are rewarded with the knowledge the community and world is renewed with each generation. No one will remember if the school's logo was emblazoned in the outfield of the turf baseball field...but a well-trained clientele will abide in the community.



### Objectives:

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You should train on:

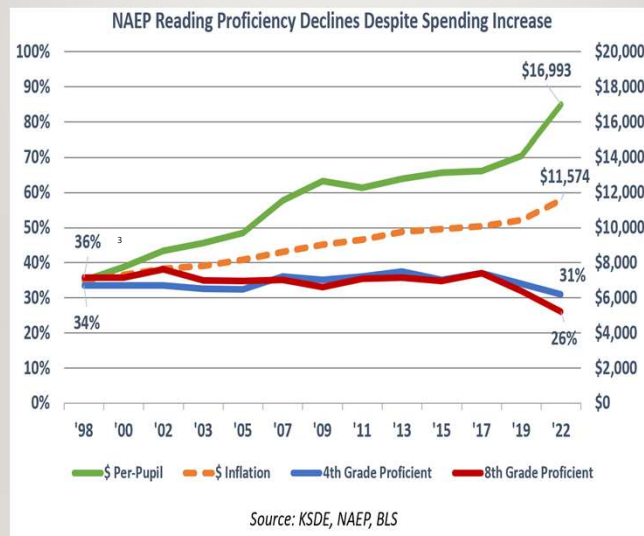
- . What do I believe?
- . Evaluate what actions alienate me.
- . Determine ways to converse about student outcomes.
- . Finding common ground
- . Setting goals
- . Identifying progress



Notice these concepts work for adults also.

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Spending up but Achievement is down



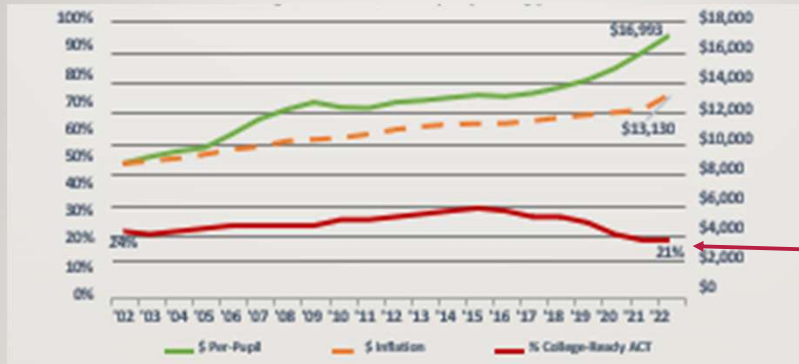
*Government-provided data: spending up, achievement down*

This is an interesting screen to me because the source is KSDE and a boe member I served with said they did not believe KPI data and wanted to get it herself from the KSDE... When this happens go look at the data from the KSDE and confirm it is being used properly or...mask altogether a screen like this one and go retrieve the data from the source their bias guides them to.

Make the context of your comments one that is generally agreed upon. Sometimes the majority view is not rooted and grounded in fact so smile a lot and practice looking innocent so that when the truth is revealed you remain humble.

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ACT college-ready in English, Reading, Math and Science



Down 3%

Sourced from KSDE



Administrators in Kansas seem to like to discuss ACT readiness when asked about Building Needs Assessment. This is a stunning revelation from KSDE!

- Each year the board of education of a school district shall conduct an assessment of the educational needs of each attendance center in the district.
- Such assessment shall be published on the school district's website.
- Information obtained from such needs assessment shall be used by the board when approving the *budget of the school district to ensure improvement* in student academic performance.



Some BOE Members take the easy path and just don't do the research but take the superintendents recommendation.

"well, he is an education professional"

If you need motivation to be objective, think of someone who has the exact same professional credentials as you in your job...do they always believe the way you do on work items?

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*Maybe modify that to “Discuss your concerns in advance and often”.*

- Don't let 'board policy' get in the way. Assert your legal obligation to participate.
- No board member should be restricted in asking questions of staff.
- Encourage public to attend and observe.



Don't let 'board policy' get in the way. Assert your legal obligation to participate. An example would be if you asked for executive session to discuss a point with the other boe members and they did not support you in a vote to empty the room. How then are you going to make your point?

No board member should be restricted in asking questions of staff. Some buildings are off limits or times during school are restricted. As a former teacher I can say that I would not let a boe member trash my curriculum for that day by dropping in unannounced, nor as a boe member would I have felt that was something I should be doing.

Encourage public to attend and observe. Be consistent with that. It is really simple math. 909 people decided my term in the first election. Now mind you, there were 6300 students in that district. I am reasonably sure that means each one had two parents. So, 12600 interested adults should have been weighing in on election day. If you factor in a 65% divorce rate in Sedgwick County (for the last 4 decades it has been like that) then not counting grandparents, we could have 15000 or 16000 motivated adults on voting day. There are 800 staff members in the district...I find this simply astonishing.

### Setting goals for the district leadership team

		USD 400 Hays - Math							
		Grade 3-5		Grade 6-8		Grade 9-12		Grade 3-5	
Year	Below Grade Level	All Grade Levels, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	All Grade Levels, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient	Below Grade Level	All Grade Levels, Needs Remedial Training	Proficient
Grade 3	13%	17%	52%	4%	12%	83%			
Grade 4	20%	40%	30%	5%	40%	55%			
Grade 5	23%	40%	20%	18%	30%	60%			
Grade 6	40%	28%	13%	22%	47%	33%			
Grade 7	50%	31%	17%	13%	50%	34%			
Grade 8	58%	40%	21%	24%	28%	48%			
Grade 9	53%	41%	8%	22%	20%	38%			

State assessment results for all students, rounded to the nearest whole number

- Achievement typically drops precipitously in elementary school and students never catch up – districts must eliminate that inflection point.

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### Setting goals for the district leadership team

- Board members aren't expected to have the answers, but you must ask the tough questions.
  - Why are the causes of achievement declines in early grades?
  - What basic elements are missing in the curriculum?
  - What's getting in the way and how do we remove those barriers?
- No excuses – it's management's job to create a plan to produce required outcomes within existing resources.





### Q1: Qualities of legitimate barriers

- Encourage building staff to think ahead to Q2. Barriers should be actionable within existing resources.
- Ask probing questions. What's the basis for this as a barrier?
- Is there strong consensus on this barrier within the school?

### Q1: Test the barriers; connect the dots

- Repeatedly emphasize that you're working together to build a student achievement plan.
- Require the superintendent to dispatch the district staff to prepare a specific achievement report for each school. Do barriers reflect the severity of the issue?

Hays Middle School - Math				Hays Middle School - ELA			
Year	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Proficient	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Proficient	
6th Grade	34%	43%	23%	34%	27%	38%	
7th Grade	22%	52%	26%	30%	33%	37%	
8th Grade	30%	38%	32%	24%	50%	26%	

2022 state assessment results for all students, rounded to the nearest whole number



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- Allocate staff and resources to achieve the plan.
  - Don't try to fit the plan in existing structure; that's trying to disprove Einstein's definition of insanity.
  - Emphasize the key principle.
  - Improving outcomes is #1 priority. That means nothing gets in the way...not DEI, extracurriculars, or existing management structure.



BNA purpose: put a plan in place to achieve specific achievement goals with existing resources.

- Allocate staff and resources to achieve the plan.
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The truth is...

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- If you don't think you are making progress, time may show that you improved communication and built trust and future BOE members will find your efforts foundational.



So, even if you don't feel you made an impact, If you kept a civil tongue, were consistent, and did value student outcomes...