



EDWARD E. FORD FOUNDATION
1958–2022




*The Edward E. Ford Foundation seeks
to improve secondary education by
supporting U.S. independent schools
and encouraging promising practices.*

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26 Court Street, Suite 2200, Brooklyn, NY 11242

FIRST EDITION

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MAJOR MILESTONES: EDWARD E. FORD FOUNDATION

- 1957 Foundation inception
- 1963 Edward E. Ford's death
- 1963 \$1M grant made to Mercersburg Academy in tribute to EE Ford
- 1963 First matching grants made (Mercersburg Academy)
- 1972 Bill Fowle hired as executive director
- 1975 First "next generation" member Ford Menard joins board
- 1978 Lawrence Hlavacek hired as executive director; Bill Fowle elected to the board
- 1979 Bill Fowle named board chair
- 1987 Phil Havens hired as executive director; Lawrence Hlavacek elected to the board
- 1989 Board votes to raise ceiling for project grants from \$35,000 to \$50,000
- 1990 Phillips Smith joins board (first retired school head not a previous EEFF ED)
- 1990 Lawrence Hlavacek named board chair
- 1992 Princeton Retreat, Chauncey Conference Center
- 1993 Phillips Smith becomes board chair
- 1995 Rapid increase in technology-related grants
- 1998 Walter Burgin hired as executive director; Phil Havens elected to the board
- 1999 Traditional Grant ceiling raised to \$100,000
- 1999 All grants now require minimum 1:1 match
- 2002 Bob Hallett hired as executive director; Walter Burgin elected to the board
- 2007 Walter Burgin succeeds Phillips Smith as board chair
- 2008 First group of Educational Leadership Grants approved
- 2011 Prouts Neck Retreat
- 2012 Educational Leadership Grant school heads meet with board members at NAIS conference
- 2013 John Gulla appointed executive director; Bob Hallett elected to the board
- 2014 School Heads convening
- 2017 Bob Hallett succeeds Walter Burgin as board chair
- 2017 Collaborative Innovation Grant approved: \$2M for Mastery Transcript Consortium
- 2018 Beekman Retreat
- 2019 Flexible Agenda instituted
- 2020 First set of special grants approved to address field-wide needs
- 2022 As of 12/31/2022, approximately \$125,000,000 in grants made

INTRODUCTION

“It’s the stories we tell that move us forward.” – REVETA BOWERS, EE FORD FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER

On behalf of my board colleagues, Executive Director John Gulla, and the dedicated board members and leaders who came before, all of whom lent extraordinary time and talent to the philanthropic enterprise known as the Edward E. Ford Foundation, I am pleased to introduce this narrative history and the “story” of the Foundation’s journey through 2022. Let me also acknowledge, with particular thanks, Jill Christensen, Suzy Menard, Ford Menard and John Gulla, the ad hoc “History Committee” that put countless hours into reviewing and editing the document you see before you. These members of the board, in particular, are the present-day keepers of the collective memory we have tried fairly to represent as we have considered our history, legacy and impact as the only foundation of our kind in the United States. I also commend Bethany Wall (more later from John) for her work as the central person pulling all of this history together.

When our founder, Edward Emmons Ford, set up the Foundation 65 years ago, he did so with deep respect and appreciation for the independent secondary school from which he had graduated in 1912, Mercersburg Academy. At the genesis of the Foundation, some felt the United States was failing its young people with an educational system falling behind those of other countries. Remembering his experience at Mercersburg, EE Ford saw independent schools as beacons for excellence in education where new ideas and thinking could be incubated, nurtured and acted upon without the challenges and restraints often found in the public sector.

As a board, we realize that the independent school sector is but a small piece of the educational world that has a sometimes deserved reputation for exclusivity; yet, we believe it has been a thought and practice leader for decades, producing significant positive impact and access to an increasingly diverse audience. The EE Ford Foundation’s mission has informed our convictions that independent education must continue to be the locus of generative thinking and opportunity for faculty and students as we continue to work to amplify our impact and catalyze change.

We undertook this history project not because we wanted to produce a bestseller (it won’t be!) but as a tool for better understanding who we are philanthropically, where we have been, and how that past can help inform and connect to future challenges and opportunities for the Foundation. This history serves as but one mile marker for our successors. As long-serving board members step away from regular service, we hope this project will inform future investments of the Foundation that build upon our historic mission, as we endeavor to support the independent school community and help build the strong civic infrastructure our democracy demands and that Edward E. Ford would enthusiastically endorse.

Robert W. Hallett, Chair

PREFACE

Adding to Bob’s words, and as a bridge to the information that follows, I offer something of my own discovery—and rediscovery as a result of my ten years at the Foundation—of independent schools. I arrived in 2013 as one who thought himself well-steeped in the independent school world. I had spent 35 years in four schools across three states. I was quickly disabused of this and humbled, awed and inspired by what I learned. Now, after ten years of visits to well over 500 schools with remarkably varied but self-determined missions, located in states across the nation, and through countless conversations with teachers, students, school heads, board members, association directors and staff members, not to mention our own board members, past and present, the expansion of my understanding and appreciation of U.S. independent schools has been significant, meaningful, and is ongoing.

I am the product of a family deeply committed to public school education. In my adulthood, I have been equally committed to the independent school community. Why? Because I value that independence, because one size does not fit all, and because independent schools create space for difference—not a difference of exclusivity, but of mission, pedagogy, philosophy, goals, values, curriculum, and much more.

I am especially interested in what this history project has revealed about the consistency over the decades of this Foundation’s “purpose and intention.” Themes unearthed from the earliest board deliberations are surprisingly consonant with themes being discussed today. This is not to say the work has not evolved—it has, and in ways that stand in stark contrast to the Foundation’s first decade. Still, the questions our predecessors asked, and the impulse to cultivate creativity in an approach to challenges, bear remarkable resemblance to what I’ve borne witness to over the last decade. Many of the challenges that schools face today have been around for decades: leadership and governance issues, enrollment fluctuation, access, faculty recruitment and retention, the hard nut of financial sustainability and the always central question of purpose and mission.

I add my thanks to Bob Hallett as Chair, to the Board, and especially to the History Committee, for their commitment to this project and I am most grateful to Bethany Wall for her tireless research, her skill in pulling together the important themes with commitment to accuracy and her talents as a writer. My thanks, as well, to Megan Kub, my Executive Assistant, for her invaluable contributions to this effort and to Lizanne Hart, whose design of the book made it beautiful.

As you explore the themes and debates that have marked our work, I encourage you to contemplate these alongside your own experience and observation. Consider sharing your reflections with us here at the EE Ford Foundation as we embark on the next 65 years. There is always more to learn.

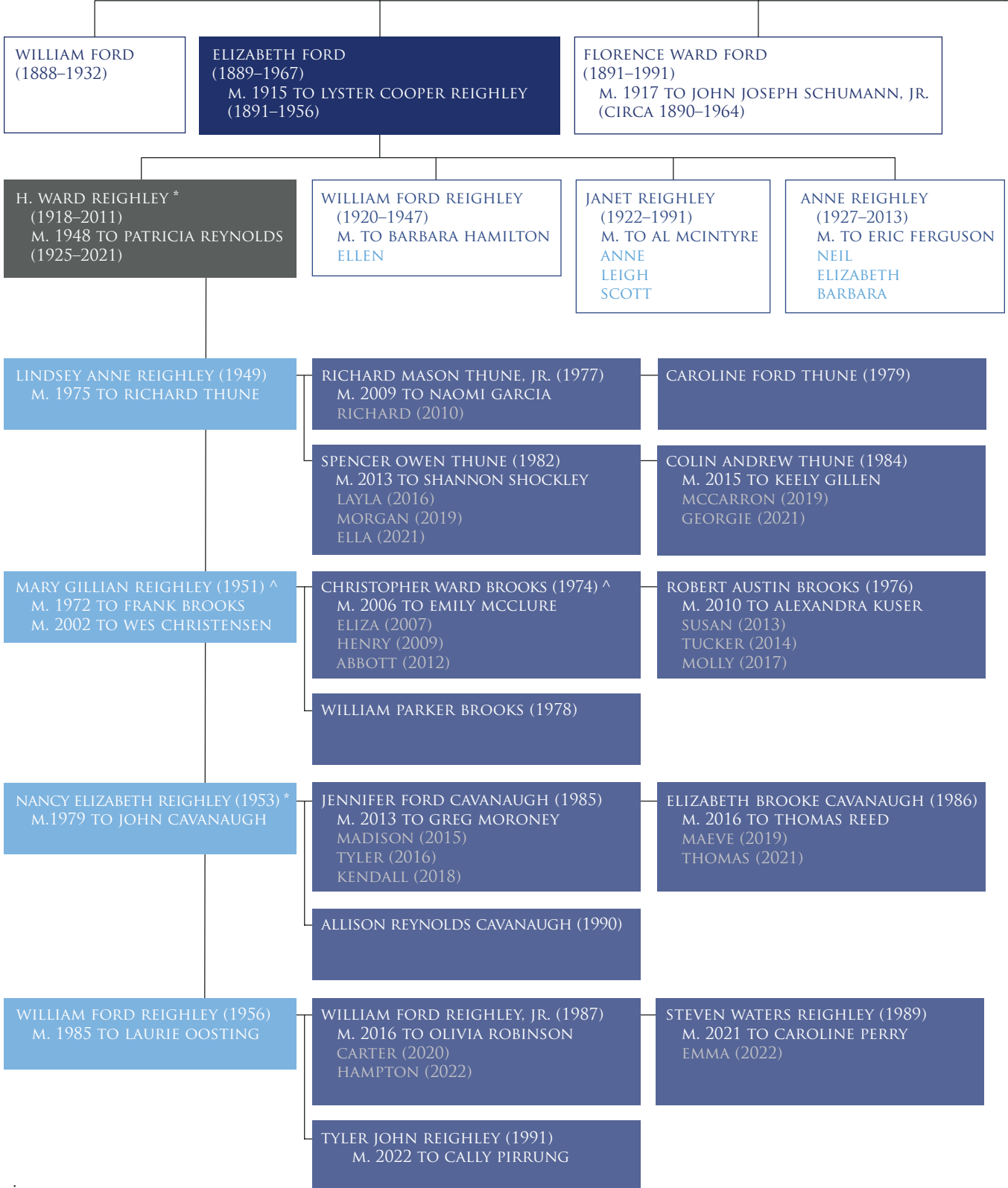
John Gulla, Executive Director

EDWARD E. FORD FOUNDATION: FULL BOARD HISTORY

NAME	YEARS OF SERVICE	CONNECTION
Edward E. Ford	inception	Founder of EEFF
Jane Bloomer Ford	inception	Spouse of EE Ford
Julia F. (Judy) Menard	inception	EE Ford and Jane Bloomer Ford's only child
Robert M. Lovell	1961–1990	Vice President, The Hanover Bank
Jane McCurdy Ford	1961–1977	EE Ford's spouse at the time of his death
Arthur K. (Dick) Watson	1961–1969	Friend/colleague; son of IBM President Thomas Watson
Walker G. (Pete) Buckner	1961–1970	Friend; brother-in-law of Dick Watson
Medary A. (Med) Prentiss	1961–1978	Mercersburg Academy classmate of EE Ford (graduated 2 years later)
William C. (Bill) Fowle	1961–1972 1977–1989	Headmaster of Mercersburg Academy at the time of EE Ford's death; executive director (1972–1977); board chair (1980–1989)
H. Ward Reighley	1961–2005	EE Ford's nephew
Lester Lamb	1969–1978	Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company's administrative officer in charge of Foundation affairs
Frank H. Detweiler	1971–1991	Senior Partner, Cravath, Swaine and Moore
Edward Ford Menard	1975–1986 1992–present	Grandson of EE Ford; son of Judy and Lee Menard; Mercersburg Academy graduate
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Larry Hlavacek (1978–1987)		
Gillian Attfield	1978–2022	EE Ford niece; cousin of H. Ward Reighley
Robert C. Williams	1979–1981	Senior Vice President, Manufacturers Hanover Bank (prior to board service, attended meetings and provided financial reports)
William V. Brokaw	1981–1984	Peer of Bill Fowle; investment banker; former Hotchkiss board member; founding chair of an educational nonprofit (died 1984)
Lyman W. (Lee) Menard	1985–2005	Spouse of Judy Menard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Phil Havens (1987–1998)		
Gillian R. (Jill) Christensen	1987–present	Daughter of H. Ward Reighley
Lawrence L. (Larry) Hlavacek	1987–1992	Former headmaster of Garrison Forrest School; board chair (1990 to his death in 1992)
Phillips (Phil) Smith	1990–2010	Former headmaster of Trinity-Pawling School; board chair (1992–2007)

NAME	YEARS OF SERVICE	CONNECTION
George J. Gillespie III	1991–2007	Partner, Cravath, Swain and Moore
William L. (Bill) Menard	1994–present	Grandson of EE Ford; son of Judy and Lee Menard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Walter Burgin (1998–2002)		
Phil Havens	1998–2015	Former headmaster of Woodmere Academy (NY) and Charles Wright Academy (WA)
John Prentiss	2001–2015	Grandson of Med Prentiss; Mercersburg Academy graduate
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Bob Hallett (2002–2013)		
Walter Burgin	2002–2021	Mercersburg Academy graduate; former headmaster of Mercersburg Academy; board chair 2007–2016
Nancy Cavanaugh	2003–2019	Daughter of H. Ward Reighley
Christopher (Chris) Brooks	2005–present	Son of Jill Christensen; grandson of H. Ward Reighley
David Hubbard	2005–present	Nephew of Gillian Attfield
Tyler C. (Ty) Tingley	2010–present	Former head of school at The Blake School; former principal of Phillips Exeter Academy
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR John Gulla (2013–present)		
Robert (Bob) Hallett	2013–present	Former headmaster of St. Paul’s School (MD); board chair (2016–present)
Suzanne W. (Suzy) Menard	2015–present	Spouse of Bill Menard; daughter-in-law of Judy and Lee Menard
Elizabeth (Liz) Duffy	2015–present	Former head of school at The Lawrenceville School; president of International School Services
Reveta Bowers	2016–present	Former head of school at the Center for Early Education
Mark Reed	2021–present	Former head of school at Charlotte Country Day School; managing director of the John M. Belk Endowment

A. WARD FORD
(1864–1948)



M. 1886 TO JULIA ADA FORD
(1863–1948)

EDWARD EMMONS FORD *
(1894–1963)
M. 1918 TO JEANETTE (JANE) BLOOMER *
(1892–1960)
M. 1961 TO JANE MCCURDY *

HARRIET STEWART FORD
(1904–1997)
M. TO DAVID LUPER DICKENSON
(1900–1987)

*Though not a blood relative, Gillian Attfield * flows from this line
David Hubbard ^ is her nephew (her sister Anne's son)*

JULIA ADA FORD *
(1924–2006)
M. 1947 TO LINDSAY M. DONALDSON
(1924–1991)
M. 1953 TO LYMAN WILLCUTT MENARD *
(1917–2013)

EDWARD FORD MENARD (1947) ^
M. 1977 TO BARBARA J. JONES
M. 2007 TO PATRICIA LYNNE WHITE

KELLY MICHELE MENARD (1972)
M. 2019 TO CHRISTOPHER HALL

KEVIN EMMONS MENARD (1979)
M. 2007 TO REBECCA DAVIS
PORTER (2010)

DAVID WARREN MENARD (1955)

ANDREW STEWART MENARD (1956–2019)
M. 1981 TO BRIGITTA RAWLS

JULIA ANN MENARD (1982)
M. 2019 TO DAVID HOWARD
TYLER (2007)
ANDREW (2020)

WILLIAM LINCOLN MENARD (1960) ^
M. 1985 TO SUZANNE WORTHINGTON ^

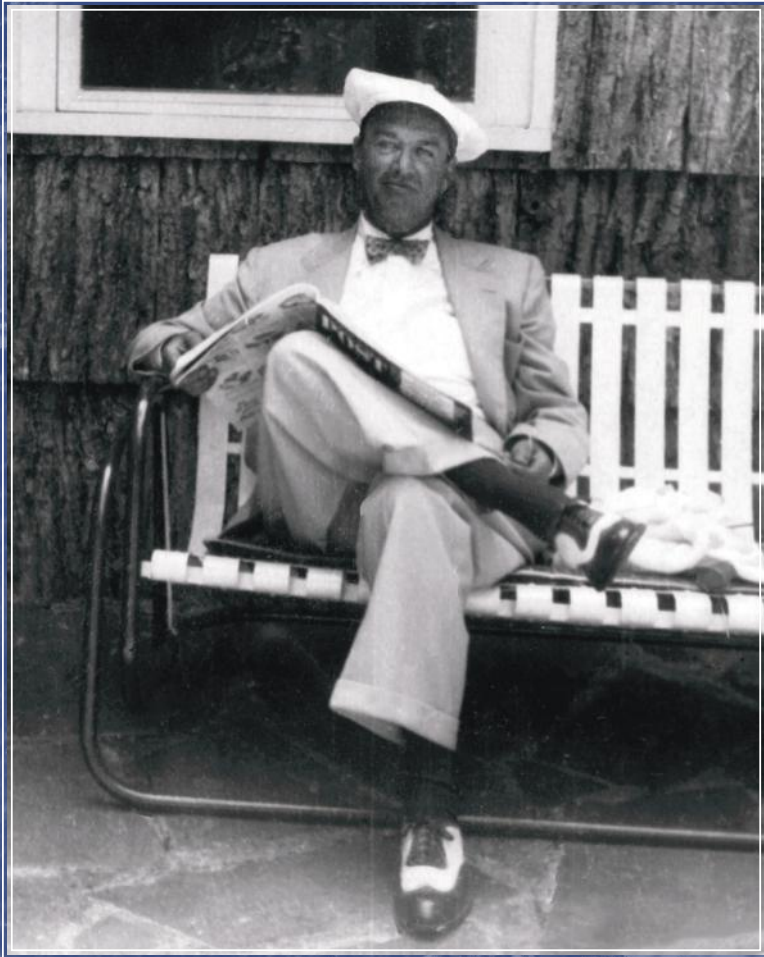
AUSTIN WARD MENARD (1989)

LINDSEY WORTHINGTON MENARD
(1991)
M. 2019 TO SCOTT WEISS

AVEY WILLCUTT MENARD (1993)

EDWARD (TEDDY) LINCOLN
MENARD (1993)

* Former EEEF Board Member
^ Current EEEF Board Member



EDWARD E. FORD

1

FOUNDING AND EARLY YEARS

ESTABLISHING THE FOUNDATION

ON DECEMBER 12, 1957, BUSINESSMAN EDWARD EMMONS FORD and Senior Vice President of Hanover Bank Robert M. Lovell together signed a Trust Agreement to establish the Edward E. Ford Foundation.¹ Through this agreement, 100 shares of IBM capital stock transferred from founder to Trust, forming the Edward E. Ford Foundation corpus.² The new Trust structure was unusual for a philanthropic foundation in the way it divides with a bright line financial and grantmaking responsibilities. Management of all financial details fell solely to the Trustee (Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co., aka Hanover Bank); determination of grant expenditures was the sole responsibility of the foundation Advisory Committee.

The parameters of this new philanthropic entity were broadly defined, with language pulled largely from Internal Revenue Service Code at the time. Grants were to be made “exclusively for religious,

charitable, scientific, literary or educational purposes,” bestowing upon the Advisory Committee power to direct Trust resources to “qualified recipients.” The presumption was that net income would largely be directed annually toward charitable purposes. Two Lifetime Advisory Committee members were named: EE Ford’s wife of nearly 40 years, Jane Bloomer Ford, who passed away just three years later, and daughter Julia (Judy) Ford Menard, then 33 years old. The founding document



JANE BLOOMER FORD, JUDY MENARD AND EDWARD E. FORD

¹ Also referred to in this text as: “EEFF,” “the Foundation,” and “EE Ford”

² Precise dollar value at time of transfer is unknown. In 2022 dollars, the value would be approximately \$650,000, however IBM shares rose more than 500% in value between 1957–1961 so that, by 1961, the original 100 shares had a value of approximately \$3 million. There is strong likelihood—albeit no conclusive evidence—that stock holdings in the Foundation’s earliest days consisted exclusively of IBM stock.

SPOTLIGHT: *Edward Emmons Ford*



EE FORD

The son of A. Ward and Julia Ada Ford, EE Ford was born in 1894, the fourth of five children. After graduating from Mercersburg Academy in Pennsylvania, he attended Princeton University and Lafayette College, joining IBM in 1917 as a junior salesman, leaving the company in 1936 as a division Vice President to establish a business. He and Jane Bloomer Ford married in 1918; their daughter Judy was born in 1924 while they were living in St. Paul, Minnesota. After his time with IBM, EE Ford established a number of automobile-related businesses, first in St. Louis and then in the Daytona Beach area of Florida, where he and his family moved in the early 1940s. Although he had broken ties with IBM when he left, he later joined the IBM board following his father's death and continued to serve until his own death in 1963.

As a youngster, Ford Menard spent time with his grandfather EE Ford both in Delray Beach, where his grandparents had a second home, and sometimes in New York City. Menard remembers his grandfather as a cheerful person who enjoyed life—and loved baseball. (In fact, EE Ford taught his grandson to keep a scorecard, just as he had taught his daughter, Judy, years earlier. Ford Menard said that his mother, Judy, used to attend minor league baseball games in Florida and always kept a scorecard.)



JANE B. FORD, EDWARD E. FORD, FORD MENARD

Ford describes a photograph of EE Ford in a suit and tie, cigarette in hand, smoke wafting around him and a gleam in his eye. Ford's Mercersburg peer John Prentiss (grandson of longtime EEFF board member and Mercersburg alum Med Prentiss, and a future board member) once commented that the look in EE Ford's eye seems to say: "I know something you don't!" That, in a nutshell, captures the spirit of the founder.

allowed members to be added in the future with the assent of existing members. EE Ford was himself eligible for life membership, though he never served in this role. Non-lifetime members were eligible for three-year renewable terms.

Why EE Ford—or Tink, as he was known by family and friends—chose this moment to establish the Foundation with IBM stock may never be known, however the unusual structure appears to have been devised by Cravath, Swaine and Moore attorney Frank Detweiler, a trusted legal advisor of EE Ford's. Detweiler guided EE Ford toward a foundation that could support a spectrum of needs as an alternative to making a gift of stock to a single institution. Provenance aside, the Foundation's early years were quiet, with only a handful of grants recorded through 1961. Minutes from that year reflect Jane McCurdy Ford's appointment to the Foundation's Advisory Committee at its November 1961 annual meeting. (EE Ford had married Jane McCurdy Ford following the death of his first wife.) Foundation assets at the time were valued at about \$7M (~\$70M in 2022 dollars), with \$277,000 as annual income; minutes from the following year report approximately the same value, with assets distributed across bonds (46.5%), mortgages (19.7%) and common stocks (33.8%).

Other early Advisory Committee members included William (Bill) Fowle, headmaster of Mercersburg Academy; Robert Lovell of Hanover Bank; EE Ford's friend Medary (Med) Prentiss, a Mercersburg graduate two years younger than Ford, and the person responsible for reconnecting EE Ford to his alma mater years after their respective graduations; EE Ford's nephew H. Ward Reighley, son of his older sister Elizabeth; Arthur K.



LEFT TO RIGHT, STANDING: MR. L. D. DICKENSON, MRS. L. C. REIGHLEY, MR. W. L. FORD, MRS. E. E. FORD, MR. E. E. FORD. SEATED: MRS. L. D. DICKENSON, MR. A. WARD FORD, MRS. A. WARD FORD, AND MRS. J. J. SCHUMANN, JR.

(Dick) Watson, president, then board chair, of the IBM World Trade Corporation, and son of IBM president Thomas J. Watson; and IBM executive Walker G. (Pete) Buckner, Thomas Watson's son-in-law (married to Dick Watson's sister Helen).

Minutes from the period suggest that Advisory Committee members were selected for their knowledge of educational issues. Many were themselves graduates of independent schools; however, it is also true that this constellation of individuals represented EE Ford's close trusted circle of family and friends.

As a member of Mercersburg's Board of Regents (Mercersburg's term for trustees) in the early 1960s, EE Ford wanted to invest resources where the school needed them most and likely consulted with Mercersburg headmaster Bill Fowle about what was most pressing. At the time, faculty of the (then) all-boys school were primarily single men, and affordable housing for married faculty was scarce, limiting Bill's ability to hire seasoned educators. Affordable housing



EE FORD (CENTER FRONT) HOLDING HIS MANDOLA WITH THE MANDOLIN CLUB WHILE AT MERCERSBURG ACADEMY

for these faculty members was a perennial challenge, so Bill may have suggested the need for such housing to EE Ford, and a \$150,000 grant (2022 value: ~\$1.5M) was made from the Foundation for this purpose in 1961, along with a \$40,000 grant (just under \$400,000 in 2022 dollars) toward a faculty retirement fund. (Bill was aware that several faculty members would soon retire, and it is probable that the obligation to them was not funded.) This early grant for housing may be the reason that Med Prentiss's grandson John recalls "faculty housing" as a funding interest of EE Ford. The Foundation's early grantmaking reflects this interest.

WHY SECONDARY EDUCATION?

"Ideas and experiments that go well beyond the institution originating them are looked on with favor."

This statement, from a 1972 annual report prepared by Executive Director Bill Fowle, articulates a fundamental principle of the Foundation's work that holds true in 2022. That year's annual report—the Foundation's first—put forth a brief history of the Foundation's beginnings and intention "to encourage and improve secondary education as provided by independent schools in the United States." It observed that individuals educated at independent schools often become well-trained, highly motivated citizens who go on to make contributions benefiting society more broadly. It posited that private and public education, working more closely together, support a more pluralistic society. By choosing this narrow swath of eligible recipients, the Foundation aimed to achieve greater impact. (A theme that holds true in 2022.) The launch of Sputnik in 1957, and concerns about the American educational system, may have informed the founder's thinking as he spoke to friends and associates in the Foundation's earliest days. His personal experience at Mercersburg had given EE Ford a visceral feel for the ways independent schools can change lives. By choosing to make investments that would strengthen the segment of the school system he had been most familiar with during his lifetime, Foundation trustees charged with carrying on after his death viewed this independent secondary school emphasis as a living tribute to EE Ford's legacy, and a concrete mechanism through which the Foundation and EE Ford could contribute to the greater good.

“Venture capital invests in private companies, where ideas can be seeded with a level of growth, innovation and change that isn’t immediately possible in the public sector; however, the goal is to have it spread through public companies because that’s where you create impact and scale. At EE Ford, we’re doing something similar: investing in a sector that allows schools to innovate, to try new things with the hope that these ideas and solutions are adopted by the bigger, broader public sector.”

– LIZ DUFFY, EE FORD FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER



AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT

In March 1963, less than five years after the Foundation’s founding, EE Ford died suddenly at age 69 of coronary thrombosis due to an arteriosclerotic coronary artery. While he had experienced occasional heart issues over the years, his abrupt death was unexpected. At a special meeting the following month, the Advisory Committee navigated next steps for the nascent foundation. Life Committee member and EE Ford daughter Judy Menard and her husband, Lyman (Lee), joined the meeting along with attorneys Frank Detweiler and George Gillespie, III, who represented Cravath, Swaine and Moore. (Gillespie, who went on to become a noted legal force also active in philanthropy—and later joined the EE Ford Foundation board—was, in 1963, a young protégé to the more senior Detweiler.)



FRANK DETWEILER

At that special meeting in April 1963, a decision was made to terminate employment of a newly hired executive director (Dr. Sterling A. Callisen), and a new Code of Regulations was approved to supplant the governing documents then in place. Notably, this Code described the principal aim of

SPOTLIGHT: *A. Ward Ford and IBM*

Austin Ward Ford (1864–1948) was born in Deposit, New York, to William L. Ford and Sarah Ward Ford. Educated in the public schools, A. Ward Ford became an assistant at his father's general store in that same town, married Julia Ada Ford (1863–1948) in 1886. Together, they had five children: William (1888–1932), Elizabeth (1889–1967), Florence Ward (1891–1991), Edward Emmons (1894–1963) and Harriet Stewart (1904–1997).

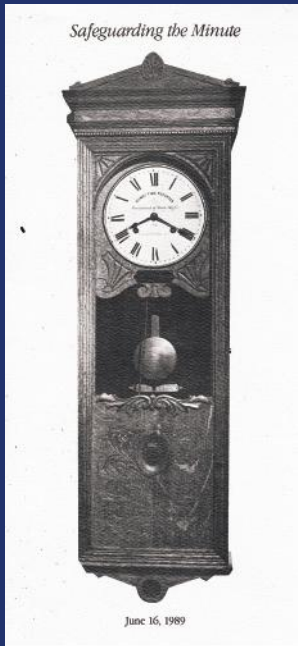
In the late 1880s, A. Ward Ford and his father attended a meeting in Binghamton that would change the course of his life. It was a time when Binghamton was embracing innovation and industrialization, actively investing in its manufacturing sector. The Bundy brothers—Willard LeGrand Bundy, jeweler, clockmaker and inventor, and his younger brother Harlow Elisha Bundy, lawyer and business executive—had invited Harlow's brother-in-law (A. Ward Ford) and Ford's father William, whose experience as a successful general merchant for more than 50 years was an asset in brainstorming an idea for a new business. Harlow's brother Willard had invented and patented the Time Recorder, a mechanical device for "clocking" in and out of work. The Bundys—particularly Harlow—sought to monetize the new invention.³ That meeting became the springboard for A. Ward Ford's involvement in helping the brothers establish the Bundy Manufacturing Company, which subsequently marketed the time recorder as the Bundy Time Recording Clock.



A. WARD FORD (CENTER) WITH GLADYS SWARTHOUT (LEFT), THOMAS J. WATSON AND JEANETTE K. WATSON

By 1900, Bundy Manufacturing was producing adding machines and sold the time-recording portion of its business to a new entity formed by investor George W. Fairchild (who also served as a director of the Bundy Manufacturing Company). The new company, the International Time Recording Company (ITR) was incorporated in Jersey City, New Jersey, and consolidated the Bundys' time-recording business with the Willard & Frick Manufacturing Company, a "time card recorder company." A year later ITR reincorporated in Binghamton and acquired the Chicago Time-Register Co., the first "autograph time recorder" company (CTR made key,

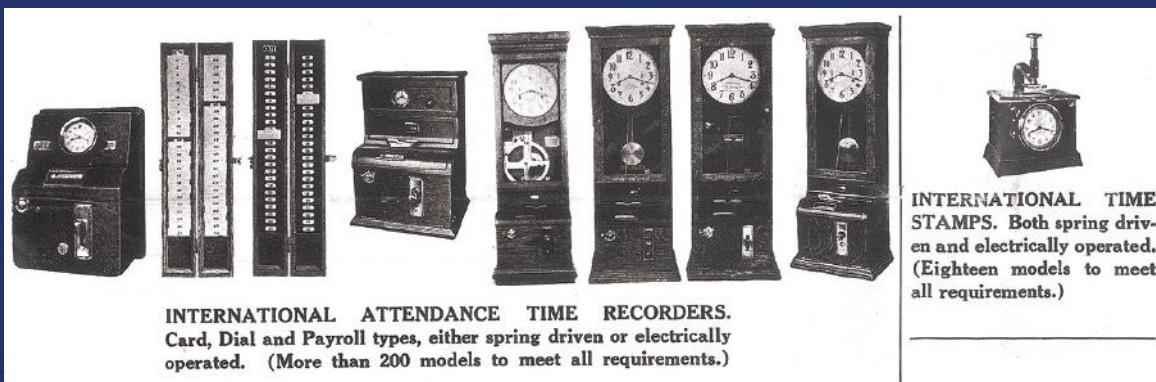
³ In 1903, the Bundy brothers had a falling-out and Willard relocated to Syracuse with another patent and device to start a new, but similar business. The brothers become embroiled in legal turmoil until Willard Bundy's death of pneumonia in 1907.



card and autograph employee time recorders). In 1906, Bundy Manufacturing and ITR moved side by side in Endicott, New York, with Harlow Bundy ultimately serving as ITR's treasurer and general manager in addition to his ongoing role with Bundy Manufacturing.

Throughout this period, new technologies were developing at a rapid pace: punched card data processing equipment, dial recorders, tabulation devices. In 1911, financier Charles R. Flint brought together four of these companies⁴ to form a new corporate entity: the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (CTR). Three years later, Thomas J. Watson was brought in as general manager. EE Ford's grandson, Ford Menard, remembers hearing that A. Ward Ford was on the committee that hired Watson. Within four years, Watson—of National Cash Register fame, and sometimes infamy—had doubled CTR's revenues.

The somewhat clunky, overly descriptive CTR name was changed in 1924, rebranded as the International Business Machines Corporation—or, as it is more commonly known, IBM.⁵ Watson went on to serve as chair and CEO of IBM until his death in 1956. And A. Ward Ford, on the ground floor of IBM from the start, also served as a trustee on the IBM board until his death in 1948. After his father's death, EE Ford joined the IBM board and continued to serve until his own death 15 years later.



⁴ The four companies were: Bundy Manufacturing Company, International Time Recording Company, the Tabulating Machine Company, and the Computing Scale Company of America, and together they manufactured employee time-keeping systems, weighing scales, automatic meat slicers, and punched card equipment.

⁵ IBM was the most valuable company in the world in 1967, just four years after EE Ford's death. Its valuation in today's dollars was \$1.3 trillion. In a 2022 business marketplace, only Apple and Microsoft would stand ahead of IBM in valuation.

“Tink was a most modest man, a most kind man, a most generous man . . . It was his appreciation of what Mercersburg did for him that made him so interested in secondary education.”

– ARTHUR K. “DICK” WATSON, FORMER EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



ARTHUR K. “DICK” WATSON



WARD REIGHLEY



MED PRENTISS



WALKER BUCKNER (BACK ROW, FAR RIGHT)

the EEFF as that of encouraging and helping to “improve secondary education as carried on by the private schools in the United States.” Thus, it was after EE Ford’s death that independent secondary education was explicitly named as a funding priority. The Code also formalized aspects of the Foundation’s governance structure and laid out an annual schedule to ensure systematic election of officers. The Advisory Committee became the Advisory Board,⁶ and groundwork was laid for eventual hire of another executive director in the future.

GRANT EXAMPLES: EARLY YEARS

Athenian School (CA) 2 grants totaling \$125,000 in 1969 and 1970, “library construction” and “library books”

Governor’s Academy (MA) 1 grant in 1971, \$100,000 to “endow faculty salaries”

Hill School (PA) 1 grant in 1962, \$5,000 for “faculty summer study”

Hotchkiss School (CT) 5 grants totaling \$579,000 between 1962–1967, including “special program in French,” “apprentice teacher program,” and “study-redesign curriculum”

Newark Academy (NJ) 1 grant in 1971, \$50,000, “to build a learning resource”

St. Andrew’s School (FL) 2 grants totaling \$135,000 between 1962–1969, “faculty housing” and “unrestricted”

ShIPLEY School (PA) 1 grant in 1971, \$75,000 for “endowment faculty salaries”

HONORING EE FORD

After EE Ford’s death, the board decided to commit the bulk of Foundation grant dollars over the next few years toward a meaningful project at Mercersburg Academy, one intended to celebrate EE Ford and his affection for the school. School head Bill Fowle was invited to submit plans for Mercersburg’s future development to help the board consider potential options. A significant gift was slated to be paid through a combination of income and principal, combining anticipated 1963 income generated through dividends flowing from the Foundation’s stock and revenue from additional IBM stock that would flow to the Foundation from EE Ford’s estate. (Note: Project research could not uncover the number of stock shares transferred from estate to the EE Ford Foundation.)

Two months later, in June 1963, the board visited Mercersburg via chartered flight from LaGuardia Airport’s Marine Terminal to hear from Bill and his school colleagues about upcoming capital projects, a visit that resulted in a \$1M commitment (~\$9.6M in 2022 dollars) to pay for a new building that would house a dining hall and student center named in EE Ford’s honor. A two-day dedication of Ford Hall took place with much fanfare in June 1965; Jane McCurdy Ford and EE Ford’s longtime friend Dick Watson addressed an array of honored guests, as did Pennsylvania’s governor at the time, William Scranton.

Along with the \$1M capital grant, the Foundation approved a \$200,000 matching grant for the school’s endowment fund. In 1964, a much larger endowment challenge grant of \$1.5M was approved—also a 1:1 match. (Together, in 2022

⁶ Throughout this text, the term “board” is used to refer to the Advisory Board.

Transformation CATALYZED

THE FOUNDATION'S HISTORY WITH THE JOHN BURROUGHS SCHOOL TRACES BACK TO 1958, shortly after the Foundation's inception. A modest \$1,000 gift to Burroughs, Judy Menard's alma mater, is the first recorded EE Ford grant. Four additional grants were made between 1979 and 1998 for traditional purposes that ranged from "replacing windows for fuel conservation" to faculty-related endowment gifts. A more recent progression of two grants over four years point to a newer trend within the Foundation's grantmaking, one in which "ripple" and "multiplier" effects are accruing benefits to both initial applicants and the independent school community beyond.



In this case, a \$50,000 grant to Burroughs in 2014 supported an intensive five-day summer institute to expand educator and institutional awareness, knowledge and skills around diversity, inclusivity and cultural competency. The school was deeply committed to equity and inclusion prior to the June 2014 Agenda at which this grant was approved; in August that year, its urgency was heightened when Michael Brown was killed by police in nearby Ferguson, a killing that helped spark the Black Lives Matter movement. The early days of the institute paved a direct path to a larger subsequent Educational Leadership Grant (ELG) request in 2018 for The Equity Exchange (TEE).



Even in its early stages, TEE was proving to be one of the country's preeminent centers for diversity work, specifically targeting independent and public school teachers and administrators. This public-private partnership focused locally in 2016, collaborating with the St. Louis public school superintendent and local elected officials to conduct work built upon recommendations from the Ferguson Commission report that emerged following Brown's death.

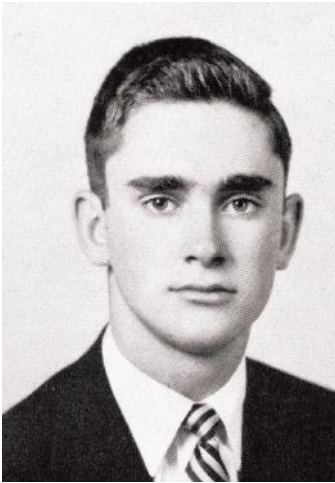
JOHN BURROUGHS SCHOOL | ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
THE EQUITY EXCHANGE

The 2018 ELG request looked ahead to a five-year goal of building an “intra-institute” approach to The Equity Exchange. Ultimately, the school aimed to establish an operating model that would allow them to generate sufficient revenue to not only sustain TEE over time, but to subsidize participation of less well-financed independent and public schools in TEE programs in the years ahead. By creating affordable and accessible opportunities for wider participation in this work, and ensuring that the programs continue to evolve to address emerging needs, the Burroughs School is leading the charge to create space for public and independent school practitioners to engage with peers in equity and inclusion work that is as challenging as it is healing. This critical work that will continue to affect each and every student those practitioners serve.

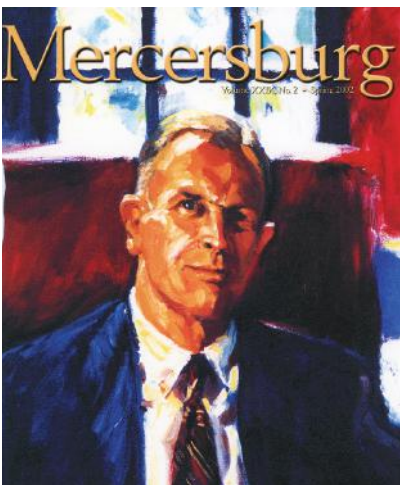


“There is a board-wide appreciation of the benefit of collective wisdom rooted in a sense of trust and connection among members.”

– JOHN GULLA, EE FORD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WALTER BURGIN, GRADUATION



BILL FOWLE ON THE COVER OF THE MERCERSBURG ACADEMY ALUMNI QUARTERLY

dollars, those two gifts amount to nearly \$17M.) A letter from Bill Fowle appearing in the Summer 1965 Mercersburg Academy Alumni Quarterly reported that the \$1.5M matching gift was inspiring the intended donor response of increasing endowment gifts from alumni. With this, the EE Ford Foundation’s “leveraging” grantmaking approach, designed to catalyze expanded support within individual school communities, was underway.

In late 1963, Lester Lamb began joining Foundation board meetings in his role as the new “administrative officer in charge of foundation affairs” for Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company.⁷ Foundation assets had risen to \$16M (~\$155M in 2022 dollars). For the first time, meeting minutes reflected executive and finance committees.

CARRYING ON

For the next several years, the board met once or twice annually to decide on grants. Cravath attorneys Detweiler and Gillespie attended most meetings during this period. EE Ford’s daughter Judy Menard and her husband, Lee, briefly joined the active board in November 1963, but it wasn’t until 1970 that Judy reengaged, going on to serve as a valued board member for the next 35 years.

⁷ Foundation Trustee Hanover Bank merged with Manufacturers Trust Company in 1961 to form Manufacturers Hanover Trust.

(Lee Menard was named to the board in 1985 and served for the next 20 years.) Judy's son Ford speculates that his mother delayed deeper engagement until Foundation processes and practices were regularized. In addition, Judy had lost both parents within four short years and was raising a family that included four sons, three of them under the age of 8. Minutes from 1970 reflect a need to add members; Judy's recommitment to board service at this juncture may reflect both her sense of filial duty and a desire to perpetuate her father's philanthropic impulse.

In the years immediately following EE Ford's death, his widow Jane served as board chair. As such, and until Bill Fowle became executive director (ED), responsibility fell to board chairs to handle grant requests, most of which proved unsuitable for consideration since many were appeals from individual students seeking scholarship support or similar. Most were denied, and a few moved to active consideration. Other board members also served briefly as board chairs through the years: Dick Watson, Pete Buckner (although absences usually had Jane McCurdy standing as chair), Ward Reighley, Lester Lamb and Frank Detweiler.

Throughout 1966, the board met to discuss funding directions the Foundation might take. There was interest in moving beyond bricks and mortar to issues affecting secondary education, such as faculty salaries and pensions or research around educational needs and innovations. Multiple views were expressed. Dick Watson, for example, felt the Foundation should advance significant developments in the field, while his brother-

in-law Pete, in an interesting foreshadowing of a trend that would emerge decades later, favored applying technological materials and techniques toward educational uses. Mercersburg friend Med Prentiss described EE Ford's expressed desire to invest both income and assets in its grantmaking. (This would prove to be another theme that Foundation board members would revisit through the years: whether to operate in perpetuity or spend down.) He also said EE Ford had wanted to support wide-ranging secondary school purposes across the country. Bill Fowle suggested that EE Ford's interest was less about secondary education in the abstract and more about helping secondary schools provide the best possible education to students.

In 1968—five years after EE Ford's death—Foundation assets had grown to \$30M (nearly \$250M in 2022 dollars)⁸ and board members were still grappling with questions of how EE Ford himself might have chosen to concentrate Foundation resources. With each passing year, the Foundation was becoming more visible within the independent secondary school community, making the work of sorting through requests and denying or advancing them more burdensome. The need for additional help—both strategic and day-to-day—in the form of an executive director was resurfacing. In response, Bill Fowle volunteered to root out possible candidates at an upcoming meeting of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), which, in January 1969, was getting its sea legs as a new organization. Three years would pass before Fowle himself was appointed to the position.

⁸ Likeliest sources of this asset growth were the combined effect of additional IBM stock gifts through EE Ford's estate and the rapidly increasing stock value.

Another facet of foundation practice during these years was whether the Foundation should take a reactive or proactive approach to its work. Should it primarily respond to applications received—especially those from schools known to Foundation board members—or should it strive to identify pressing needs of schools and meet those needs? Look for opportunities through which funded programs could be felt well beyond school boundaries? Such discussions were indeed the earliest versions of conversations around similar topics that have regularly occurred ever since and could be considered forerunners to the eventual Educational Leadership Grant Program initiated in 2008 and the Foundation’s Collaborative Innovation Grant made in 2017.

By the early 1970s, the board decided that Bill Fowle was the right man for the job, and in 1972 he became the Foundation’s full-time executive

director. Fowle had by then served as headmaster of Mercersburg Academy for more than 10 years, through the socially and politically turbulent 1960s. The world of independent schools—not unlike the world outside its doors—was changing, and his ability to manage those shifts as the leader of Mercersburg was increasingly challenged. When Fowle assumed the ED role, 1953 Mercersburg class valedictorian Walter Burgin left his teaching post at Phillips Exeter to succeed Fowle as Mercersburg headmaster. Years later, Burgin himself would emerge as an essential force in the Foundation’s continuing journey. Bill Fowle’s tenure as ED—and subsequent role as board member—was the first in a flow of leadership that continues more than 50 years later, that of hiring former school heads to lead EEFF’s philanthropy as executive directors, and subsequently joining the board, sometimes even serving as board chairs.

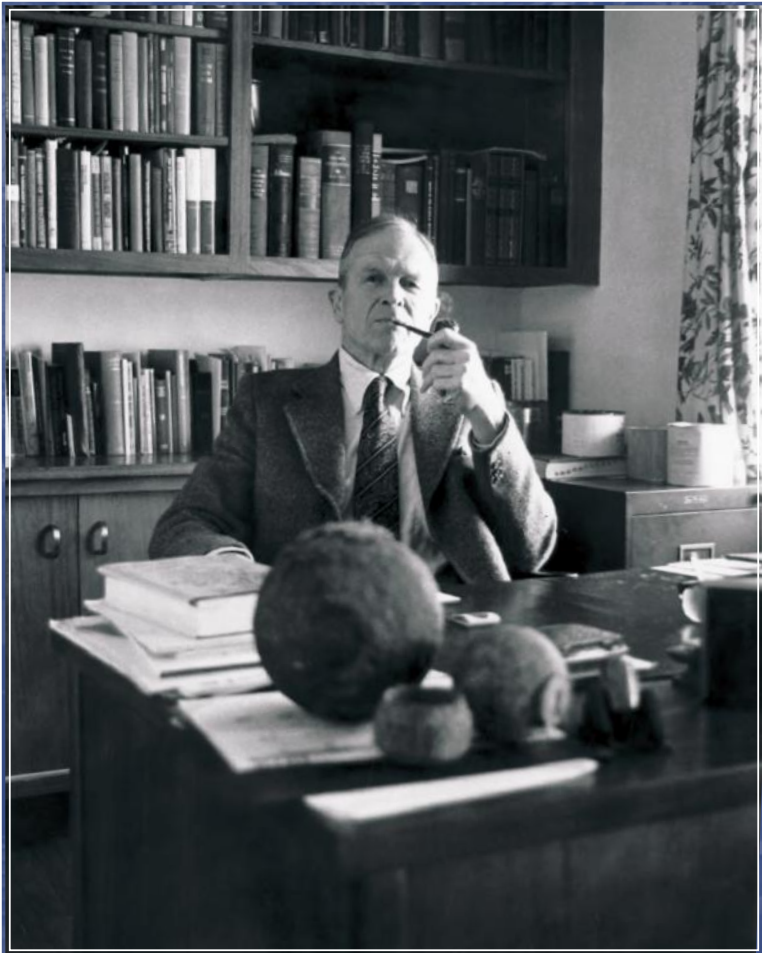


The MERCERSBURG + ACADEMY

*Alumni
Quarterly*

VOL LX, NO. 4 - SUMMER 1965





BILL FOWLE



INSTITUTING SYSTEMS: THE BILL FOWLE YEARS (1972–1977)

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, BILL FOWLE WAS A CHARISMATIC LEADER. A graduate of Williams College, at the time of his death Bill was the only athlete in Williams's history to win 12 varsity letters in three years (football, basketball, baseball and track), not to mention his role as captain of the Williams football team in 1931. Leadership and teamwork were second nature to Bill. It took only a year at Harvard Law School for him to realize what he really wanted to do with his life: teach history and coach sports, which he did initially at Governor Dummer Academy (now The Governors Academy in Byfield, Massachusetts) before returning to Williams to become a coach and pursue an advanced degree in education from Columbia University. In 1938, he was named athletic director at Hotchkiss School (Connecticut), later becoming the school's director of admissions. From there, he moved to Mercersburg in 1961 and served as headmaster before being hired as executive director of the EE Ford Foundation in 1972.

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE

Bill brought a systematic approach to his job, initiating a range of practices that laid groundwork

for today's operations. He instituted site visits to schools and shared observations with the board, spotlighting takeaways from these visits and describing trends in independent secondary education. He also hired an assistant to tackle day-to-day administrative duties—another first.

Most important, he began to spearhead ongoing, direct discussions with the board to pinpoint the Foundation's overarching purpose, probing the board's areas of strongest interest. With requests from schools continuing to multiply, Bill pressed the board to create clearer definition around grantmaking goals and priorities, proposing possibilities (e.g., faculty training, innovation, religion—long an area of special personal interest to Bill). He exposed them to Waldemar Nielson's then hot-off-the-press book interrogating American philanthropy, *The Big Foundations*, which not only examined the finances and operations of large American foundations but also suggested a disappointing lack of creativity within philanthropy.

He challenged the board to critically assess its ten-year grant history with a view toward making more intentional choices about future direction.

“What made him a leader was the simple strength of his character—no sham, no manipulating, not trying to impress, just rooted direct honesty, integrity and commitment to the good of the school.”

– WALTER BURGIN, FORMER EEFORD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
BOARD CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER-AT-LARGE



He believed such an approach—echoed by leaders who followed him as ED—could amplify the Foundation’s impact and help prospective applicants better grasp its priorities. The Foundation’s first decade of grants divided into rough thirds: 1) endowment (faculty salaries, scholarships/special programs); 2) facilities; and 3) programs. These grants had been distributed about equally to boarding and day schools (though more to single sex than to co-ed schools).

In addition to contemplating grant strategy, Bill and the board dug into “weedy” topics such as the best means for processing applicant informa-

tion, and the pros/cons of requiring standardized information through use of application forms. While he appreciated the efficiency of such applications, Bill worried about a reliance on criteria such as test scores, which reveal some, but far from all, of a school’s story. With the board’s blessing, Bill began to distill and provide key applicant information, along with an assessment, and prioritization of each application (A, B, and C), that signaled to the board which requests he thought were best prospects for EEFF funding. It was a system that continues in 2022, with modifications.

Stewardship around past grants also entered these early board discussions, a theme that would emerge regularly through the work over the years to come. Was the Foundation being sufficiently attentive to what happened once grants were paid? Were anticipated results being achieved? Most important, were EEFF’s resources being well spent? At the time, stewardship due diligence took the form of Bill’s school visits in conjunction with new requests, meaning that the only schools being systematically evaluated were those seeking renewal grants. Bill saw little utility in contacting past grantees



BILL FOWLE

for the purposes of evaluation if he believed renewed funding unlikely, particularly since he was increasingly seeing opportunities to support new and compelling work in the field.

Under Bill Fowle’s leadership, the board operated through a grants “Agenda” approach, with schools contacting the Foundation to express interest in consideration for a grant, and Bill placing those schools on a future meeting Agenda. The Foundation voted to join the Council on Foundations as a member, cautiously aware of its place within a broader philanthropic community, and began to produce simple annual reports that listed grants made along with information about the foundation’s interest areas. In short, Bill played a critical role in creating structures at EEFF and shepherding the board toward its governance role.



FORD MENARD

A NEW GENERATION AND AN EARLY BOARD RETREAT

In late 1974, a new generation joined the ranks of board membership with the election of EE Ford’s grandson Ford Menard. Like his grandfather, Ford had graduated from Mercersburg (1965). Bill Fowle was serving as headmaster at the time. Ford remembers being called from the classroom and asked to report to the headmaster’s office. Worried he was in trouble, Ford made his way to the office, to receive word from Bill that his grandfather had died. Ford recalls Bill, a formidable and even intimidating presence, being extraordinarily gentle and kind as he shared the sad news. Ford, like his grandfather, found his Mercersburg experience formative. As a kid from northeast Florida, his time at Mercersburg had instilled confidence and bolstered his ability to be a self-starter. Over the years, he realized that his independent school education had given him a leg up on his peers.

Shortly after Ford joined, a special meeting took place in Delray Beach, Florida.⁹ By all measures, this could be considered the Foundation’s earliest retreat—a meeting designed to delve more deeply into policy matters instead of the usual consideration of grant requests. As he had from the start of his tenure as ED, Bill Fowle seemed determined to nudge the board toward definition around the Foundation’s ultimate purpose.

Over the two-day meeting in February 1975, consensus was reached that EEFF should continue to fund primarily independent secondary schools while conferring upon Bill Fowle the authority to

⁹ During a 2022 discussion, Ford and longtime board colleague Jill Christensen recalled attending a 50th anniversary party for “Aunt Harriet and Uncle Dave”—EE Ford’s sister and her husband—around that time. Perhaps the special meeting was held to take advantage of the fact that board members would already be assembled.

“Every child in an independent school is there by choice, which means that independent schools can demand effort and involvement in a singular way.”

– FORD MENARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



bring forward special field-related opportunities as he saw fit. The board further agreed that its impact could be enhanced through larger support for fewer projects and reaffirmed strong interest in projects benefiting the secondary education field over any one school. (It is striking to note how early this core value surfaced—and has been thoughtfully discussed and expanded upon in the 45 years since.) It made official a decision against limiting grants geographically and affirmed a standing policy for applicants to wait three years between applications—whether or not a prior application had resulted in a grant or a denial, though exceptions would be considered. (Another theme: Rules are made to be broken.)

At the same meeting, the board continued a discussion begun months earlier around whether the Foundation should continue in perpetuity or spend down through accelerated grantmaking. Jane McCurdy Ford (then McCurdy Doherty) recalled EE Ford’s expressing a desire that the Foundation continue in perpetuity but was open to alternate paths. With no compelling reason not to continue, the board agreed that the Foundation would carry on until such time when closure

seemed the best option—and then only with a thoughtful, practical plan in place.

CONTEMPLATING POLICY

By the Foundation’s April 1977 meeting, most applicants were waiting a year for applications to be considered. (Bill reported 30 applications in the wings for the June 1977 meeting, 40 for November, and 50 for April 1978). An analysis of the previous five years indicated that the Foundation was receiving and processing roughly double the number of requests actually approved for grants. (Today’s “success rate” for each Agenda for Traditional grants tends to be approximately 70% gaining approval.) Bill Fowle’s analysis indicated that the vast majority of applications (80%) came from east of the Mississippi River, with approximately half of these from just five states (NY, MA, CT, PA, NJ).¹⁰

Strategies for reducing the number of requests were debated. For instance, the Foundation could focus predominantly on schools serving boarding students, or on schools with a track record of 10 years or more. They revisited the idea of geographic boundaries for eligibility, but

¹⁰ Nearly 45 years later, Executive Director John Gulla reported that the breakdown remains quite similar in terms of proposals received from east of the Mississippi (roughly 80%), but the concentration of those from NY, MA, CT, PA and NJ dropped from about half to about a third.

after robust conversation with all board members weighing in, even some who were typically more quiet, there was consensus that limiting geography to eastern states would perpetuate a stereotype of elitism that appealed to no one. Between that and a board culture that resisted arbitrary rules, the board expanded Bill’s discretion to decline a greater number of requests sufficient to create dockets of 35–40 requests per meeting. The board would review a list of declines that contained briefly stated reasons for denial, moving to accept those decisions or discuss individual requests as needed.

Also instituted was a policy of school heads visiting the Foundation’s Lakeville, Connecticut, office as an early step in the application process. This was seen as a way for schools to indicate a level of “sincerity and seriousness” regarding the request. Not wanting to create insurmountable barriers for smaller, less-resourced schools, the board gave Bill discretion to continue bringing forward schools where such a visit was not possible.

EEFF OFFICE LOCATIONS	
BILL FOWLE	Lakeville, CT
LARRY HLAVACEK	Princeton, NJ
PHIL HAVENS	Providence, RI
WALTER BURGIN	Washington, DC
BOB HALLETT	Washington, DC
	Baltimore, MD
	Portland, ME
JOHN GULLA	Brooklyn, NY

TRANSITIONS

By 1977, Bill Fowle’s wife was failing, making travel to schools increasingly difficult. Several transitions were afoot. First, Jane McCurdy Ford had decided the time had come to step away from the board—once again, the question of dissolution was briefly raised, and the board affirmed its past decision to continue, determined to add new, younger board members as soon as possible. This need was underscored one year later when Med Prentiss also announced his intention to retire from the board, specifically requesting that the board find a younger member to fill his board shoes.

A niece of EE Ford, Gillian (Gill) Attfield, who had moved to the States with her sister Anne during WWII to live with Ford’s youngest sister Harriet Dickenson and her husband, David, was the next family member to join the board in April 1978. At her very first meeting, Gill made a practical suggestion: Why not review requests in reverse order on occasion, to assure that applicants at the end of the alphabet gain equal advantage to those reviewed when the board was fresh? Though this approach was taken only intermittently through the years, a knack for cutting through standing protocols and raising new ideas became a hallmark of Gill’s long board tenure, which lasted more than 40 years. Perhaps this spirit is why, just a few months later, Gill was elected to the board’s executive committee.

Concurrent with Gill Attfield’s arrival on the board in 1978, the Foundation’s executive leadership shifted with the hiring of Lawrence (Larry) Hlavacek, who for a decade had served as school head of Garrison Forest School in Maryland following 21

“Larry was a dedicated and thoughtful leader, both as ED and later as Board Chair. He made everyone at the table feel valued and appreciated – every voice mattered – and he was always open to new ideas.”

– JILL CHRISTENSEN, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



years teaching at The Lawrenceville School in New Jersey. Upon his hire, Bill Fowle was elected to the board; two years later, he became board chair. This inaugural “changing of the guard” was the first of several operational patterns that have repeated through the years. First, appointing executive directors who—like Bill Fowle—bring experience as school heads and are known within the independent school community. Second, inviting outgoing EDs to join the board, thus ensuring that their on-the-ground independent school experience will continue to inform the Foundation’s work. And finally, relocating EEFF

operations near the home of the incoming ED. EEFF was small, with limited staff—usually just one assistant. Consequently, such moves were not terribly disruptive. Usually it was a matter of shipping files and setting up shop in a new town.

As had been the case under Bill Fowle, there were still many more grant applications flowing to the Foundation than could be considered for grants. In response, Larry Hlavacek proposed an eligibility restriction of considering requests from NAIS members only, citing that NAIS membership requirements could reduce the number of inappropriate applicants approaching the Foundation. To support his case, Larry provided data for the most recent three years of grants; just 13% were not NAIS members. With concerns expressed by some about leaving worthy requests on the table—Judy Menard, whose word carried unique weight with her board colleagues, was one—the NAIS guideline was adopted with a board willingness to consider exceptions when warranted.

More and more, the ED was actively interacting with the broader independent school community, attending annual meetings of the Headmasters’ Association,¹¹ NAIS and other field networks.



LARRY HLAVACEK

¹¹ Now known as the Heads & Principals Association

Executive Director Reports

Each ED brings their own style and approach when reporting to the board. Sometimes reports are presented orally at board meetings; other times written reports are sent in advance of meetings. In other instances, a combined approach is used. The sample here is from a report provided to the board by Larry Hlavacek early in his tenure as ED.

THE EDWARD E. FORD FOUNDATION

The Executive Director's Annual Report

November 20, 1980

You will find, enclosed, statistical reports and other summary information covering the operations of the Foundation for the 1979-80 fiscal year. It has been another full and interesting year. The pace of applications for consideration remains brisk. We have just recently closed the Agenda for the April, 1981 meeting, a preliminary list enclosed, and are beginning to place schools now contacting us on the June, 1981 Agenda which matches our scheduling of the year past. These Agendas usually contain more schools than are actually discussed at the meeting because a number of them fail to follow through after the initial contacts are made. Some do nothing about preparing proposals despite telephone calls and letters from us reminding them of the deadlines for doing so.

I have, so far, made visits to 37 schools to more closely observe and examine them and have continued to be impressed with the wide range of types of schools we deal with. They are of many philosophies, have facilities ranging from bare to opulent, populations of seventeen to over one thousand, are day, boarding, single sex, coeducational, church-connected, urban, rural, suburban, wealthy and struggling, but all attempting, in their own ways, to provide secondary school education to young people in our country. Spending time at these institutions and talking with those involved with them is fascinating, stimulating and educational.

News of developments concerning independent education continues to come forth. This summer, Senator Daniel Moynihan (D-NY) made a strongly supportive statement about foundations and introduced two bills (S.2948 and S.2949) dealing with private foundation payout requirements. Briefly, each bill provides that the present provision requiring a payout of 5% of total assets or all net income whichever amount is greater, would be modified.

The Moynihan bills offer two alternative changes. S.2949 would fix the payout at 5% of assets or an amount equal to "real annual income", whichever is larger. His alternative bill, S.2948, would simply fix the payment of a flat 5% of total assets. He prefers the former.

In introducing these bills, Senator Moynihan made a number of vigorous statements in support of foundations. He agreed with those critics of the present law who see the existing payout rule as compelling "some foundations gradually to liquidate themselves."

DIRECTIONS TO THE TRUST

The structure of the Edward E. Ford Foundation as a Trust with bifurcated lines of accountability—fiduciary held by the bank, philanthropic decisions held by the Foundation—historically called for “Directions to the Trust” to be appended to meeting minutes at which grant decisions are made. For most of the Foundation’s history, signatures from all Advisory Board members were required. Since this would be drawn up after the meeting, such signing could be difficult to coordinate. After years of the bank sequentially circulating a single copy to each board member to obtain signatures, the approach shifted to sending a document to each member for signature. While serving as chair, Walter Burgin pointed out that he regularly confirmed accuracy of information with ED John Gulla before signing; this paved the way for a new protocol whereby the chair confirms the info with the ED, and then signs the document. The practice of appealing to all board members to sign this document held through 2021, at which point the global coronavirus pandemic—which disrupted numerous long-held patterns—made official the change to the board chair as sole signatory of the “Directions to the Trust” regarding grant payments after confirming the information with the ED.

Trends of the time indicated that independent schools were succeeding financially, raising sufficient resources to improve facilities, even as the challenges were many, from rapid turnover of school heads and strained relations between school heads and trustees, to underfunded faculty salaries and benefits, scholarship assistance expansion and rising costs.

When Larry Hlavacek announced in 1986 his intention to retire the following year, the board agreed that Larry and Bill Fowle should work together to identify ED prospects. Eight candidates were whittled to three, and Phil Havens became the next ED in 1987, a year when another new member was added to the board: Gillian Christensen (then Jill Brooks), who joined alongside her father Ward Reighley—the board’s longtime Vice Chair and a founding board member. Jill’s background in education, and her experience as an independent schoolteacher (at Greenwich Country Day School when she first joined the board), made her a logical next generation participant. As she arrived at the board table, Jill joined her second cousin Ford Menard and her father Ward’s first cousin Gill Attfield. By then, Judy’s husband Lee had also rejoined the board (1985). Lee’s devotion to the Foundation reflected his love for Judy. He saw how this Foundation linked to her parents and enjoyed accompanying Judy on sojourns to New York to connect with family and realize her father’s aspirations to serve the independent schools community.

As Phil Havens entered his new role, which he went on to play for over a decade, word arrived that longtime board member—and EE Ford’s Mercersburg friend—Med Prentiss had died. In tribute, the board approved the first of several

grants made through the years to honor individuals with special connections to the Foundation’s founding and evolution. In this case, a \$100,000 grant was made to Mercersburg Academy for a scholarship fund in Med’s name. Another mark of “changing guard” at EEFF came as Bill Fowle missed Phil Havens’s first board meeting for health reasons in November 1987. Meeting minutes reflect it as Bill’s first board meeting absence in nearly 30 consecutive years of service.

Less than two years into Phil’s tenure, the Foundation received the John R. Chandler Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education for outstanding contribution to independent schools in the field of institutional advancement. The standing ovation the Foundation received represented a capstone of the Foundation’s early era, from EE Ford’s decision to create the Foundation to the long-serving board members who had carried on in his name to assist independent schools and serve students.

Even as this recognition was received, the next chapter in the Foundation’s journey had begun.

SPOTLIGHT: *Judy and Lee Menard*

“My mother was about this Foundation as she was with all things. There was no preaching; it was simply a thing she did, leading by example in a quiet, gentle way.” – BILL MENARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER

EE Ford’s daughter Judy and husband Lee are both described as “larger than life”—though in different ways. Where Judy preferred to avoid the spotlight, Lee brought humor and irreverence to most any table and never seemed too concerned about drawing the attention of others. As board members, they were perfectly balanced. Although Judy grew up in a family of wealth, she and Lee were not extravagant in their lifestyle, raising their four boys in a comfortable but not flashy way. They had a small, close-knit group of friends and no need for the admiration or adulation of others.

Judy and Lee looked forward to their trips to New York City several times a year to attend board meetings, anticipating treasured time with friends and extended family, and packing their “NYC clothes” for the trip. (As residents of Florida and western North Carolina, their visits to the Big Apple provided opportunities for a slightly different fashion approach!) Judy led from a place of quiet conviction. Though she did not always feel the need to speak, she commanded full attention when she did. A lover of history and family, her dedication to extending her family’s philanthropic legacy was profound.

“Judy was a wonderful person. I had so much respect for her. If she didn’t think we should do something I thought we should do, I would keep listening until I understood why.”

– WALTER BURGIN, FORMER EE FORD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BOARD CHAIR AND MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Judy had passion for the Foundation and her husband had passion for supporting her. They both felt pride in the work. Son Bill Menard remembers his mother telling him once that not a day went by when she did not think of her father; Bill now says the same about her. His thoughts and memories combine with a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunity to engage in this philanthropy—work that he is eager to perpetuate for future family members. He knows firsthand that the Foundation can be a powerful force for connecting to those who have come before, and those who will follow.



JUDY AND LEE MENARD



LINDA HLAVACEK, BARBARA BURGIN, LARRY HLAVACEK, TONI FOWLE, BILL FOWLE, PHIL HAVENS, WALTER BURGIN IN 1992



JILL CHRISTENSEN AND HER FATHER, WARD REIGHLEY

TRIBUTE GIFTS

Edward E. Ford

1963	\$1M	MERCERSBURG ACADEMY (MERCERSBURG, PA)
		New dining hall/student center (Ford Hall)
1964	\$200,000	Endowment (matching)
1964	\$1.5M	Endowment (matching)

Medary Prentiss

1988	\$100,000	MERCERSBURG ACADEMY
		Med Prentiss Scholarship

Bill Fowle

1993	\$100,000	MERCERSBURG ACADEMY
		William C. & Antoinette T. Fowle Fund for Faculty Excellence
1996	\$25,000	HOTCHKISS SCHOOL (LAKEVILLE, CT)
		To renovate a wood floor gymnasium, renamed in Bill's honor, to recognize his years as athletic director from 1938–1945
2002	\$500,000	MERCERSBURG ACADEMY
		To enhance the role of the Academy Chapel in the school

Larry Hlavacek

1993	\$100,000	THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL (LAWRENCEVILLE, NJ)
		Lawrence Hlavacek Scholarship Fund
		To finance school-related activities for scholarship students

Jane McCurdy Ford

1993	\$100,000	UNIVERSITY LIGGETT SCHOOL (GROSSE POINTE WOODS, MI)
		New library acquisitions and technology improvements

Judy Menard

2007	\$100,000	JOHN BURROUGHS SCHOOL (ST. LOUIS, MO)
		Development of the school's wetland restoration initiative

Phil Havens

2019	\$250,000	HACKLEY SCHOOL (TARRYTOWN, NY)
		Endowment to support 9–12 faculty professional development



BILL FOWLE ON THE MERCERSBURG CAMPUS

STEWARDSHIP OF FOUNDATION ASSETS

When the Foundation was established in the late 1950s, no minimum spending requirement was yet in place for private foundations. Minimum spending requirements were established through the Tax Reform Act of 1969, guidelines that were refined and simplified in 1976. The revised code defined the 5% payout requirement that today governs private foundation spending. The EE Ford Foundation was established exclusively with stock—specifically, with IBM, a blue-chip stock that reliably paid investor dividends for many years. Since IBM-generated revenue was a primary source of the Foundation’s income in its early days, annual revenue fluctuated. So, too, did the value of its primary asset: IBM stock.

In early 1973, for example, the asset value of the Foundation’s portfolio was \$34.7M (~\$208M in 2022 dollars). Just 18 months later, that value had dropped significantly to \$20.8M (~\$125M today). It is possible that the Foundation’s earliest grants were paid primarily through distribution of dividends.¹² This legacy may explain, to some degree, slower-than-typical reductions in annual grant allocations to keep them aligned with shifting portfolio valuation (such as when the dot-com bubble burst in 2000, or during the sharp financial downturn of 2008 and 2009). Today’s Foundation portfolio holds less purchasing power than might be the case were its portfolio and resource history more similar to other philanthropic foundations—and if maintaining purchasing power had been a goal set forth early in its evolution.

In the mid-1980s, the largest single holding in the Foundation’s portfolio was IBM stock, perhaps not surprising given the family’s long history with IBM, together with the infusions of stock to establish the Foundation and following EE Ford’s death. A historic relative portfolio high of \$48M in April 1986 dropped to \$44M later that year, likely attributable to declining IBM stock value. This prompted further diversification of holdings within the portfolio over the next several years, though by late 1987 IBM still represented nearly 30% of total portfolio holdings and more than half of its equity position. (Four years later, IBM stock comprised 40% of the equity portfolio and just 20% of the overall portfolio.) Despite the drop, the standard foundation practice of spending exclusively income was sometimes questioned by board members, who viewed existing spending limits on grants as arbitrary when worthy projects were before them.

While it cannot be confirmed, the volatility of the total Foundation portfolio in the early decades was likely linked to the fluctuation in the price of IBM stock when it comprised a large part of

¹² Many years (and bank mergers) later, few records are available to confirm asset fluctuation or portfolio diversification during this early period. Theories described here are “best guesses” based on the combined knowledge and research of those most closely associated with the Foundation’s history.

(continued)

the portfolio. Without adjusting for splits, the share price was below \$4 in the mid-1960s and was more than \$120 by the end of the first decade of the 21st Century.

This board conviction echoed an observation that had surfaced in the 1960s, when Med Prentiss suggested that his friend EE Ford had expressed willingness to spend assets as well as income in making Foundation grants. As a whole, the board of the late 1980s agreed that it would not serve EEFF's overarching goals to be inflexible on the matter of invading principal "where such invasion would be necessary to fund appropriate grants" and that such encroachment might well be "averted by an investment policy placing greater emphasis on income." This discussion and language may be the earliest expression of an approach that took hold over time, one of more deliberately maintaining portfolio "purchasing power" so that the Foundation could continue providing schools with meaningful support over time, as inflation shrank the relative value of the portfolio, the income it generated, and the dollar value of grants given.

PERSONNEL POLICIES

Small organizations—foundations included—sometimes struggle with ways to incentivize and compensate their employees, since enrollment in standard benefits programs can be costly. Yet compensation and benefits are increasingly important as the gulf between school head salaries (and benefits) and those offered by the Foundation widens. Over time, the Foundation has made slow, steady progress incorporating such policies. One example: in April 1989 Larry Hlavacek raised the question of the Foundation reimbursing retired EDs for premiums they pay for coverage under individual health and medical insurance policies (about \$1,400 annually, at the time, per Hlavacek). The Finance Committee agreed to investigate and, in June 1989, a retiree medical benefits plan was adopted to cover retired employees and their spouses—then just Fowle and Hlavacek—which continues through today for living retirees and spouses.



EDWARD E. FORD

3

LEADERSHIP AND EVOLUTION

TACKLING TRENDS: PHIL HAVENS (1987–1998)

In just over a decade as executive director, Phil Havens served under three board chairs: Bill Fowle, Larry Hlavacek and Phil Smith (who, when consulted about Phil Havens several years before Smith joined the board, had highly recommended Phil for the role of ED). In the context of the Foundation’s 65-year history, this stands as a period of considerable leadership transition.

The incoming ED had spent 20 years at the Hackley School—teaching English, coaching swimming, and serving in administration—before leading Woodmere Academy on Long Island (New York). He then moved to Charles Wright Academy (Tacoma, Washington) where, as headmaster from 1977–1986, he strengthened the school academically while improving both the facilities and financials. From the start, Phil brought data-driven analysis and big picture thinking to the Foundation. While this may have been partly a reflection of an expanding technological ability to collect and distribute such data, it also may reflect Phil’s penchant for data over anecdotal

analysis, the latter style being more associated with his predecessor, Larry Hlavacek.

IMPACT STUDY

In response to disconcerting statistics around faculty attrition and recruitment challenges at schools, as well as Phil’s own analysis of the Foundation’s prior decade of grants (marked by a shift from scholarships to facilities), Phil proposed that the Foundation undertake an Impact Study to better understand the alignment between its grantmaking and field-related needs. The Impact Study—which the board approved over the objections of Larry Hlavacek, who felt



PHIL HAVENS

“[Phil Havens’s] kindness, his common sense, his deep knowledge of the independent school world and his economy of language (why use 25 words to say something that was just as well expressed in five) was both greatly appreciated and invaluable.”

– JOHN GULLA, EE FORD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



spending \$12,000 for an outside consultant was unnecessary—aimed to gain written feedback by surveying three years of past grantees combined with a random sample of telephone survey polling to schools of all types and sizes.

Conducted by consultants Edward Cissel of Rhode Island and Lowell Kuehn of Evergreen State College in Washington, an Executive Summary of the Impact Study was released in September 1989. Findings suggested that, while many school heads were comfortable with EEFF’s existing grants process, new approaches might amplify impact. For example, a two-tier system whereby schools could request larger grants was suggested—indeed, the report analysis had shown that “larger grants were incrementally more successful.” Some school heads felt that encouraging matching grant requests from schools (vs. outright grants) was a winning strategy for building financial support inside a school’s own community. The NAIS requirement was questioned by some heads; others felt the foundation should be more direct in stating priority interest areas. In a perennial debate about this topic during board discussions, one view

held that defining specific interest areas would lead schools to gear proposals toward the guidelines rather than basing requests on true need.

At its November 1989 meeting—two years into Phil’s tenure and Bill Fowle’s final as board chair—the grant ceiling rose from \$35,000 to \$50,000. Other suggestions surfaced through the Impact Study were not formally adopted but triggered a new willingness among the board to creatively “raise the bar” of eligibility in ways that could better serve schools and students. At his final meeting, Bill Fowle ended as he had begun, provoking his board colleagues to make clear decisions around sticky issues such as whether:

- schools with large endowments should be handled differently from schools with fewer resources
- schools undergoing school head transitions should be considered
- some form of “leverage” be required (i.e., matching requirement)

Questions along similar lines have been revisited periodically over the more than 30 years since.

BOARD CULTURE

By 1991, in connection with an economic downturn, Frank Detweiler—always a strong board force—expressed concern that schools had come to believe their best chance pathway to grant approval was to request a match, yet the financial data schools submitted suggested vast disparities in relation to fundraising capacity. Anticipating a sharp increase in the number of schools unable to meet matching requirements, the board reversed its recent ruling on the topic, advising Phil Havens to remain neutral with applicants about matching grant requests. Declining enrollment was mentioned as a pressing challenge for schools; the board had no wish to create additional hurdles for grant recipients.

This anecdote illustrates a recurring theme that continues to run through board decision-making and grants policy: Uncomfortable with hard-and-fast rules, the EE Ford Foundation board, as a body, prefers to surface and discuss issues, reach consensus decisions on topics where strong sentiment and agreement exists, leaving space for exceptions, and deferring decisions on matters that require more time and discussion. It is common for the board to appoint an ad hoc committee tasked with delving more deeply into such topics with the goal of bringing policy recommendations forward in the future and achieving full board consensus.



MIDDLE ROW, SEATED, ON THE RIGHT: JANE MCCURDY FORD

In this case, the board agreed that school heads should be in place at least one year before applying, and that, where a matching grant would serve a school's best interest, the ED should encourage this approach.

In 1991, two years after Bill Fowle stepped down as board chair, he resigned from the board. As he did, he proposed Phillips (Phil) Smith, former head of Trinity Pawling, as a new member. Phil's name had been mentioned previously as a board prospect, but school head responsibilities had prevented him from accepting. Bill's departure created a gap of direct school experience around the board table and, fortuitously, the now-retired Phil Smith agreed to join the board the following year; Bill was named an honorary member. A second \$100,000 tribute gift was made to Mercersburg Academy—this time in Bill Fowle's honor—and a grant in support of the William C. & Antoinette T. Fowle Fund for Faculty Excellence was formally presented to the school the following year by Larry Hlavacek, who became board chair when Bill Fowle resigned.

“Were it not for the Foundation, we wouldn’t have continuing connection between our families: the Menards, the Reighleys and the Dickensons. All of those relationships have been buttressed by the Foundation.”

– FORD MENARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER

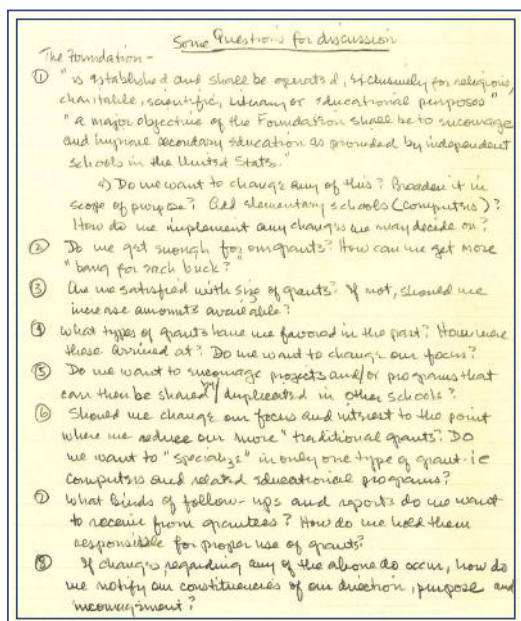


In April 1991, George Gillespie III joined a meeting for the first time since the Foundation’s early years, and was quickly voted onto the board, a strategic move in anticipation of Frank Detweiler’s imminent retirement from the board. As George assumed the board role of informal legal advisor, Frank joined the ranks of honorary board members. Later that year, another formative early presence in the Foundation’s

story passed away: Jane McCurdy Ford. After consulting with her family, the board made a third tribute gift of \$100,000—in this case, to the University Liggett School in Michigan, the independent secondary school of her youth.¹³

TECHNOLOGY EXPLOSION

By the 1990s, computer technology was ubiquitous, and schools were scrambling to catch up. In a flurry of activity during that decade, the Foundation made more than 110 technology-related grants totaling nearly \$5M to schools across 30 states. Grants covered costs of computer labs and learning centers, high-speed networks, hardware, software and peripherals. And since school faculty wanted to use technology to teach their students, a number of grants supported faculty training on the new systems. With few exceptions, the grants supported the purchase of technology tools rather than the use of this technology to innovate and enhance curriculum. That would come considerably later.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LARRY HLAVACEK’S HANDWRITTEN QUESTIONS FOR PRINCETON RETREAT DISCUSSION.

¹³ Jane was technically a graduate of The Liggett School, the all-girls predecessor school to University Liggett. When The Liggett School merged with Grosse Pointe University School in 1969, University Liggett was the result.

PRINCETON RETREAT

In the manner of EDs before and after him, Phil Havens regularly reported on proposed changes to previously approved grants, keeping the board in the loop so they could approve or reject such changes as they saw fit. Technology began to surface as an emerging factor and need at schools, from classroom computers to library research capacity. Board Chair Larry Hlavacek suggested taking up the topic of technology at a special meeting that ultimately took place at the Chauncey Conference Center in Princeton in June 1992. In addition to a brief business meeting, the retreat delved into the approaching wave of technology, and much more, from revisiting the Foundation's major objective of improving secondary education through support of independent schools to questions of amplifying the Foundation's "bang for each buck." Grant size, stewardship through regular reporting, and communication with the independent school community all appeared on the meeting agenda, and an effort to streamline the Foundation application to better serve the needs of both applicants and board members was discussed. (Jill Christensen remembers working to improve the application in the days and weeks that followed.)

Perhaps the most transformational result of this retreat was not immediately evident, and may



PHIL HAVENS

have been accidental. The two-day format created a natural opening for relaxed social time in the form of an evening meal between meetings. Larry and Phil's choice to structure the gathering in this way set the stage for replicating this tradition in the future, and these dinners have become a source of cohesion across the board through free-form discussion where board members have the chance to share not only issues of education but stories of life, work, and family.

Larry Hlavacek's sudden death in November 1992, just two weeks after he presented the Fowle tribute gift at Mercersburg, and less than six months after the Princeton retreat, left a leadership void. Given the board's reliance on educators for knowledge and insight into schools, recent board addition Phil Smith was asked to

“One of your major responsibilities as a board chair or executive director is to create a field of trust.”

– PHIL SMITH, FORMER EE FORD BOARD CHAIR



assume the board chair role and, to everyone's relief, he accepted. After consulting with Larry's family, the board approved a fourth tribute gift, a \$100,000 endowment gift in Larry's honor to The Lawrenceville School, where Larry had taught for 21 years.

In November 1993—one year after Larry Hlavacek's death—Phil Smith proposed that, going forward, the board gather for dinner the evening prior to certain board meetings as a way to create space to discuss, free of time constraints and formality, philosophical and practical questions related to EEFF policies. Such opportunities, and the casual social interactions they nurtured, would also strengthen ties among board members. Stepping into the board chair role when he did perhaps positioned Phil Smith and his partner in leadership, Executive Director Phil Havens, to address a few fundamental questions that had languished in the years prior.

The first meeting of 1994 reflected this new format. Dinner discussion referred back to topics raised at the Princeton retreat, and ranged from the Foundation's future to investment policy, number and size of grants, and how to think about schools with larger endowments. With a view toward remaining true to the founder's interests; the board contemplated whether the bylaws should be amended to require a specific number of EE Ford family board members. When two of the youngest family members (Gill Attfield and Jill Christensen) affirmed willingness to serve for long periods, in the tradition of those before them, the board decided against arbitrarily assigning a "family member quota" but rather to thoughtfully add new family members over time.

Several months later, Judy and Lee's son William (Bill) Menard was approved as a new board member, and more than 25 years later, Bill continues to serve. Seeing his parents in board meetings offered new perspective. (Bill remembers thinking: "Wow! They're smart, with good judgment," a new observation, perhaps, for this

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL BONDS

The early years of board meeting expansion would include a dinner meeting the night before the board's annual meeting in the fall, Phil Smith arranging for space at the Williams Club in New York City. In time, this format was applied to all meetings and, in 2000, meetings began alternating between the Williams Club and The Century Association, where George Gillespie was a member. As Ty Tingley joined the board, he began arranging for the Century meeting space. After Phil Smith stepped away from the board, the dinner meeting "rotation" incorporated the '21' Club, since The Century Association was not always available, and in 2018 Aretsky's Patroon restaurant entered the mix. The global pandemic disrupted this pattern, shifting all meetings to video conference. Partial return to the Foundation's cherished "social bonding" tradition occurred in June 2022, when many board members traveled to New York City despite a spike in coronavirus cases. While all were glad that technology tools had enabled them to continue conducting business via Zoom, there is no substitute for the special fellowship that these dinners offer.



2021 ZOOM BOARD MEETING

younger version of himself.) A lawyer by training, Bill subsequently shifted career gears to become a business owner alongside his wife, Suzy. Bill has served on the board of the Millbrook School, his alma mater, for three decades, including ten as board chair. He acknowledges having grown into the Foundation board role and says he is always learning. Over time, Bill has become the beating heart of this family foundation, the unofficial “holder of the family torch” in much the way his mother Judy was throughout her many years of involvement.

ALIGNING POLICY TO MISSION

Throughout the 1990s, the board discussed whether and how the EEFF was staying on course with its mission to serve independent secondary schools and students, making periodic adjustments from time to time. A previously established practice of declining schools with restrictive hiring or admissions practices was affirmed, reflecting the topic of “eligibility,” which sometimes surfaces as new schools apply. (A key tenet of eligibility remains the underlying question: Is a school able to control its own educational destiny?) The desire for greater leverage through higher multiple matches for new grant requests was an ongoing refrain. Phil Havens urged board

members to attend annual NAIS meetings to be attuned to school trends and meet grantees and other field practitioners. And in contemplating the Foundation’s grantmaking to school-related associations, Phil suggested that, taken together, these grants may have achieved more for independent schools than had individual grants to the schools themselves.

Funding preferences at this time included technology, scholarships, and faculty benefits. When some board members questioned the wisdom of continuing to fund technology projects, Phil Havens suggested there was more work to do if independent schools were to be current and relevant in a quickly changing world. Even as he advocated for tech support, however, Phil expressed frustration that incoming requests

REMEMBERING LEGAL INNOVATOR FRANK DETWEILER

In 1997, attorney and honorary board member Frank Detweiler, chief architect of the EE Ford Foundation’s trust structure, passed away. A resolution in Frank’s honor named him as one of the Foundation’s most admired and valued members, noting his years of multifaceted service. “It was his astute planning that established the Foundation in its unusual form, reserving the administration of the trust to Mr. Ford’s bank and creating a separate board for the distribution of funds. . . . He contributed generously of his knowledge of the law and his understanding of education.”

NON-SCHOOL GRANTEES: A SAMPLER

[Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education \(CSEE\): 10 grants over 49 years totaling \\$339,000](#)

WASHINGTON, DC

Previously known as CRIS (Council for Religion in Independent Schools), CSEE partners with schools to foster ethical thinking, a sense of purpose and the advancement of empathy, equity, and justice. Grants have endowed programs, supported new initiatives and, most recently, supported a Visiting Scholars program.

[Friends Council on Education: 4 grants over 28 years totaling \\$181,425](#)

PHILADELPHIA, PA

National association of Quaker schools that supports heads, administrators, trustees, and teachers serving in Quaker schools. Grants have supported leadership development, school governance and sustainability, among other things.

[Association of Delaware Valley Independent Schools: 4 grants over 14 years totaling \\$282,625](#)

BRYN MAWR, PA

This regional association serves more than 130 independent schools in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. EE Ford funding has supported programs in trustee training, governance, financial sustainability, and collaborative models.

[National Association of Independent Schools: 27 grants over 54 years totaling \\$1,273,500](#)

WASHINGTON, DC

Serves more than 2,000 schools and associations in the United States and abroad. Grants include a series of six grants to research and roll out a leadership development program that ultimately became the Aspiring Head Program.

lacked imagination, particularly around projects that could ultimately benefit a broader swath of schools.

In 1994, the board shifted from a portfolio management approach that had historically relied on income from bonds to cover grantmaking to a 60%/40% stock to bond portfolio ratio to match the board's long-term goal that the Foundation exist in perpetuity. Understanding that a portion of that year's grants would be paid from principal, the board agreed that maintaining purchas-

ing power on a rolling three-year average was more important than whether any single year's grants were paid from income or principal.

By 1997, with the foundation's portfolio value now at approximately \$65M (\$122M in 2022 dollars), Gill Attfield, long a proponent of getting as much money as possible to schools and students, proposed raising the grant ceiling once more. Since Phil had alerted the board that he planned to retire by June 1998, the board delayed a decision on grant size until after a new executive director

was in place. Some on the board—Judy and Lee Menard were two—expressed a preference for focusing resources on schools with less money and more need, leading Phil Havens to analyze 1990s grant recipients and determine that 13% of grants since 1991 had gone to schools that were, at the time of the grant, financially challenged. Interestingly, during that same period, an equivalent percentage of grants had been made to financially secure schools.

At that year’s annual meeting, Phil Havens commenced his final phase of ED leadership by opening on the state of the field, pointing out that technology was still an important factor and that the most creative educators would deploy tech in innovative ways. He expressed concern that a recent strong economy had led to sharp tuition increases at many schools—significantly greater than those in faculty salaries. The following spring, ED designee Walter Burgin joined the conversation—his hire had been coordinated through a search committee comprised of board

chair Phil Smith and board colleagues Ward Reighley and Ford Menard.

At Phil’s final meeting as ED in June 1998, technology requests had begun to subside, perhaps because Phil had told schools they would need to begin folding such costs into operating budgets instead of approaching EEFF with routine equipment requests. Stepping down as ED, Phil reflected on “11 years, 33 board meetings and 1,200 proposals,” and was immediately elected to the board, where he went on to serve for nearly 20 years. Through that time, he supported new EDs and board members with extraordinary generosity of spirit. He shared his years of knowledge, gently mentoring new arrivals. In total, Phil’s service brought the Foundation into a new phase of its evolution and, after his death in 2018, a special \$250,000 tribute gift was made to the Hackley School in Tarrytown, New York, where Phil had spent 20 treasured years as an educator, coach and administrator.

“Grants from EE Ford have helped to establish Penn Charter’s Center for Public Purpose, which engages Penn Charter students in community-based work addressing some of the most pressing social issues in metropolitan Philadelphia.”

– DARRYL J. FORD, HEAD OF SCHOOL, WILLIAM PENN CHARTER SCHOOL



DARRYL FORD WITH STUDENTS



LEE AND FORD MENARD

SHARPENING FOCUS: WALTER BURGIN (1998–2002)

“Walter always looked down the road for issues that were facing independent schools, then would challenge NAIS to get ahead of those upcoming trends and issues.”

– DONNA OREM, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

The incoming executive director, Walter Burgin was, by his own design, in the role just four years, yet his time with the Foundation proved pivotal. He began at an organization with 40 years of grantmaking experience under its belt; when he left, the Foundation was lining itself up for the next 40 years.

Not only did Walter bring greater definition to board’s grantmaking priorities, he also helped clarify how the board—and by extension, the Foundation—approached its work. His guiding presence served EEFF’s work far beyond his time as ED, including nearly 20 years on the board that followed, nine of them as board chair (2007–2016). Under Walter’s leadership, the Foundation remained rooted in its historic stance of being open and responsive to individual school needs while stretching its philanthropic



WALTER BURGIN

wings to take calculated risks designed to maximize grantmaking return in service of the broader educational field. Ironically, it was a job Walter never meant to hold.

IN MERCERSBURG WE TRUST

In 1998, having left the headmaster position at Mercersburg Academy, where he had taken the helm for 25 years following Bill Fowle’s departure for the EE Ford Foundation,¹⁴ Walter was happily settling into a teaching position at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. When former independent school colleague Phil Smith, then board chair of EEFF, reached out, insistent that Walter consider becoming an ED candidate, Walter

“Everything of value in my life, I trace back to Mercersburg.”

– WALTER BURGIN, FORMER EE FORD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
BOARD CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE



¹⁴ Interestingly, during her 41-year tenure at Mercersburg Academy, Miriam Witherow was executive assistant to Walter Burgin, Bill Fowle, and EE Ford’s classmate Charles Tippetts. Tippetts graduated alongside EE Ford in 1912 and later became Mercersburg headmaster, serving from 1941–1961, when Bill Fowle stepped into the role.

“As a school head, being visited by another school head who wants to talk about your school is pretty unusual. The fact that the executive director is a former school head gives them great credibility.”

– LIZ DUFFY, FORMER HEAD OF SCHOOL, LAWRENCEVILLE
AND EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



agreed—reluctantly at first. “It was Mercersburg asking; I didn’t know how to say no,” he remembers thinking. As had been the case with founder EE Ford and others, Mercersburg had played an outsized role in Walter’s life, and his gratitude for the school was wide and deep.

In 1949, his father single-mindedly held that Walter should attend school far from the small town where his family lived, determined that a robust education would be the springboard to Walter’s future. Indeed, four years at Mercersburg shaped Walter and influenced his life path—including introduction to his wife of many years, Barbara, whom he met on a blind date when

accompanying a roommate home to Pittsburgh one weekend. Walter loved teaching. When Bill Fowle left Mercersburg in 1972, Walter was not looking for a school headship, but it was Mercersburg, and yes was the only answer. When approached by the Foundation in 1998, “It was Mercersburg asking again,” he said. “Indirectly, perhaps, but still impossible to refuse.”

Importantly, Walter was passionate about independent school education and the work of the Foundation. Well aware that no other funders were making grants to independent schools in the way EE Ford was, he proceeded with his candidacy. His status as a Mercersburg graduate, independent school teacher who had known and worked with Bill Fowle, and Mercersburg headmaster gave him singular credentials for the job. The list of references he supplied included a former Mercersburg faculty member, the NAIS board chair, and a Mercersburg board member: John Prentiss, grandson of longtime board member Med Prentiss, EE Ford’s long-ago Mercersburg classmate, who later became an EE Ford board member. Walter was offered the position, and he accepted. Thus, in a curious parallel to EE Ford’s impulse for creating the Foundation—his Mercersburg experience—the Foundation



LIZ DUFFY

SPOTLIGHT: *School Visits*

“School visits deepened my knowledge and added color to my ED observations and reports.” – BOB HALLETT

Starting with Executive Director Bill Fowle, school visits were an integral element in grant consideration. A conversation in 2022 among three Foundation EDs—Walter Burgin, Bob Hallett and John Gulla—shed light on the indispensable role such visits play. All acknowledged that visits to schools had opened their eyes to the fuller world of independent schools in its breadth, depth and possibility.

“Visits are key to the whole process.” – WALTER BURGIN

While not every visit is equally valuable, there is information to be gained from multiple perspectives—of students, faculty, and others. School visits enable EDs to better understand whether their earlier discussions with school heads and project applications ring true on the ground. And because the Foundation ED is a former school head, the questions they ask while on visits are informed by their own knowledge and school experience. In addition to school heads—and their colleagues—welcoming the chance to “show off” their school, there is affirmation in the visit alone. That the premier funder of independent schools in the nation is interested in seeing “our” school up close to learn what makes it tick means a lot. This recognition alone carries value for school leaders within their school community.

“If you can put the students at ease, they’ll tell you the real deal of what’s going on!” – JOHN GULLA



BOB HALLETT, LEFT,
WITH TY TINGLEY



JOHN GULLA

“Board members here are dedicated and amazing. They hold different opinions but those opinions are always respectfully shared.”

– NANCY CAVANAUGH, FORMER EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



bearing his name now had a leader who himself had a life-changing experience in that same academic home.

GETTING TO WORK

When Walter arrived, he found a strong system in place overall—one that had been formulated by Bill Fowle. At the same time, he recognized that management of incoming grant requests could benefit from fine-tuning. Existing practice held that schools would contact the Foundation to express interest in being considered for a grant and be placed on a future meeting “Agenda”—sometimes even a year or more later. Given the time lag, schools would not typically identify

specific projects or request amounts for which funding was sought—just interest in applying. Some of these schools never sent in full applications. Often, the whole process had been initiated and driven by the school’s development office, and Walter thought it essential that the relationship be between the head of school and the ED from the first. Going forward, Walter addressed this successfully by simply requiring that placement on an agenda required a call from the head of school. Attrition was quickly reduced.

In addition, Walter contacted all schools that had expressed interest, reminding them that they had been placed on a future Agenda. He encouraged schools to apply for what they believed their schools needed most rather than what they imagined would be most “fundable” based on past Foundation grants. The number of full submissions lurched upward. Larger numbers of grants considered on each Agenda made school visits to all virtually impossible. It also led to the possibility that more applications could result in a greater number of denials than had been previously the case.

To help maintain the Foundation’s historically high applicant success rate—a factor that incentivized schools to undergo the multiphase and demanding application process—Walter began to



NANCY CAVANAUGH

factor in the ratio of applicants to available grant resources on the front end. By carefully monitoring the number of schools placed on future Agendas, then managing variables such as grant size, waiting period between school applications, and the number of grants resulting from each board meeting, the Foundation could mitigate disruptive effects of external forces—e.g., dips in portfolio value—and self-imposed shifts in giving patterns related to changes in grantmaking strategy.

Another of Walter's early tasks was to complete a job Phil Havens had begun: establishing a website and arranging for email. Despite an emphasis on technology grantmaking, the Foundation itself had yet to catch up with the digital world (a pattern that would continue until the late 2010s). Minutes from 1998 describe estimated website development costs of \$5,000 plus a \$50 monthly running cost, noting that Walter was authorized "to arrange for creation and installation of such a website, to be tried for one year." Needless to say, the Foundation's digital presence stuck and expanded as the years transpired.

Finally, in a move to standardize grant materials for the board, Walter modified the system for grant recommendations begun by Bill Fowle, enhancing the "ED's Observations" to add more context and tell a story that enabled board members to gain a greater sense of a school, its classroom activity, teachers and students while on school visits.

LIFTING THE CEILING ON GRANT SIZE

Two years before Walter was appointed to the job, board member Gill Atfield had proposed raising the maximum grant amount to keep up with ris-

ing costs and school needs. Back then (1996), the Foundation's portfolio had stood around \$60M; by 1999, it was approaching \$80M (\$145M in 2022 dollars). After discussing strategies for preserving the portfolio's "purchasing power" while creating space for larger grants—an approach that prevails in 2022—the board made a decision to raise the maximum grant level for schools to \$100,000. Several other policy decisions were made in relation to waiting period between requests and grant matches, which would now be required. With its decision to make significantly larger grants, the Foundation aimed to "think bigger and broader" about its public purpose and, for the first time, the EEFF stated overtly and publicly its goal to impact the school ecosystem as a whole. Over time, Walter continued to press the board for clarity on policy, which prompted expanded grant size for nonschool grants commensurate with those for schools. (The board had previously remained silent on the subject.)

FIELD TRENDS AND FOUNDATION FOCUS

In 2000, halfway through Walter's tenure as ED, he organized a dinner meeting with invited guests from the independent education field. His aim was to sharpen the board's focus on pressing issues and get them thinking about those "down the road" needs. A thoughtful discussion followed around topics of creativity; faculty over facilities; tapping the knowledge and passion of smart, retiring school heads; the ever-waning pool of future school heads arising from ranks of faculty; board governance and trustee education; and leveraging technology around curriculum.

Ty Tingley, then the Principal of Phillips Exeter Academy, made several interesting comments related to creativity, also pointing out—a full 17 years before the Collaborative Innovation Grant was made—that “raising the price tag” (e.g., to \$1M) could help prompt bold experimentation. As he did at every meeting (and, like others before him, including Bill Fowle), Walter wanted to move the needle on refining the board’s keenest grantmaking interests. Those interests were ultimately defined as:

- Providing direct benefit to teaching faculty
- Helping schools attract and retain talented people
- Supporting recruitment of diverse faculty
- Fostering creative approaches to compensation

The clarity forged through this process enabled Walter and Phil Smith to co-author a synopsis of the Foundation’s interest areas that was subsequently shared with the independent school community.

BOARD AND STAFF TRANSITIONS

When Walter arrived in 1998, the majority of board members had served for many years. Ward Reighley had been a board member since inception; Judy Menard, essentially the same. Three members had joined during the decade prior to Walter’s arrival (four, if you count former ED Phil Havens, who joined the board when Walter became ED). The perennial question of how and when to bring on new board members was again the subject of discussion.

Phil Smith, Phil Havens and Walter—all former school heads who retained connections in the field—had earlier agreed to build a list of nonfamily candidates. Family members were asked to suggest relatives who might be a good fit. In time, several educators were proposed along with a “family-adjacent” suggestion, John Prentiss. John’s grandfather Med—EE Ford’s Mercersburg schoolmate—had been a founding board member, and John, who had attended Mercersburg in the same years as board member Ford Menard, remembered tales of “Tink” and Med’s Mercersburg days, and of the Foundation’s early years. In addition to Med, who had graduated from



JOHN PRENTISS



FROM LEFT: ANDY, DAVEY, FORD AND BILL MENARD

Transformation CATALYZED

BAY AREA BLENDED LEARNING CONSORTIUM | OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA *MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES: LIFELONG LEARNING IN A SHIFTING WORLD*

IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF NEW STRATEGIES BUILDING ON FOUNDATION TRADITION, the five schools that launched the Bay Area BlendEd Consortium (BlendEd) in 2013 had long histories of successful application to the EE Ford Foundation as far back as 1969. Collectively, they had made 45 proposals and received more than 25 grants totaling more than \$1.5M when they came together to apply for BlendEd. Those schools were: The Athenian School, The College Preparatory School, Lick-Wilmerding High School, Marin Academy, and The Urban School. In 2013, they joined forces to jointly offer a set of “blended” classes that combined face-to-face and online instruction. (Two additional schools later joined the Consortium.)

Foundation grants for collaborations require one school to assume fiscal responsibility for the grant, despite sharing resources across collaborating institutions. In this instance, College Prep stepped up to assume that role. Having met head of school Monique DeVane at the Foundation’s School Heads Summit in 2014, the board had gained firsthand experience of Monique’s dynamism and energy as a successful leader. (An example of how interaction between the board and field practitioners builds knowledge and trust that goes on to support future work.)

In spite of varying educational practices across the schools (e.g., some of the partners worked on semester calendars, others on trimesters; some had Apple technology while others used PCs), they were able to move beyond potential stumbling blocks to reach good faith collaboration in pursuit of their shared goal to combine demonstrated best practices for online learning with each school’s proven strengths in direct classroom instruction and experiential learning. This blended online/face-to-face model expands learning opportunities and helps students prepare for the ever-changing methods of instruction and communication they will face in college and beyond.

While the consortium had been doing an excellent job measuring and evaluating the program prior to seeking an Educational Leadership Grant, they wanted to better understand and manage aspects of both BlendEd enrollment and outcomes. A \$250,000 grant in 2016 supported this deeper dive and, six years later, BlendEd’s model of collaboration stands strong and is enormously valuable to all participating schools—including and well beyond the overnight shift to online instruction forced by Covid-19 in early 2020.

Mercersburg in 1914, John’s father, George, and uncle Medary Jr. were Mercersburg grads (1939 and 1943 respectively). John himself had graduated in 1965 (the same year as Ford Menard)¹⁵ and was a Mercersburg trustee; John’s children were Mercersburg graduates as well. Independent schools were in John’s blood—Mercersburg in particular.

Although John initially declined the board’s invitation, a few years later, imagining his grandfather’s pleasure at his involvement, John reconsidered when Ford reached out a second time. In 2001 he joined the board, adding value to the Foundation and his board peers for 15 years. He regularly challenged the board to think outside the box and pushed the Foundation to do

more. He was also a strong proponent of a major investment (which later took the form of the BHAG/ Collaborative Innovation Grant). Two years later, in 2003, family member Nancy Cavanaugh joined her long-serving father and sister (Ward and Jill) at the board table. Nancy was herself an independent school graduate who cared about quality education. Familiar with independent schools through the lens of the Westover community (her alma mater) and New Canaan Country School (where her daughters went), Nancy brought those experiences to her board service. When Nancy stepped down in 2019, she suggested it was time for “new blood” on the board. Since she no longer was directly involved with schools, stepping aside opened space for others who were.

EEFF STAFF MEMBERS

1972	Jane Johnson	Bill Fowle
1972	Miriam Witherow	Bill Fowle
1979	Catherine Brett Smith	Larry Hlavacek
1981	Annie Graaskamp	Larry Hlavacek
1984	Sandra Appleby	Larry Hlavacek
1989	Ann Tiefield	Phil Havens
1998	Kelly Heatwole	Walter Burgin
2003	Tosha Webb	Bob Hallett
2006	Nancy Thornburn	Bob Hallett
2013	Annie Rollyson	John Gulla
2014	Lucy Kaminsky	John Gulla
2016	Paola Di Tolla	John Gulla
2022	Megan Kub	John Gulla

¹⁵ During the 1965 graduation ceremony, Ford remembers that before his name was called, Bill Fowle announced that the next two diplomas would be awarded by Board of Regents member Med Prentiss. Bill called Ford’s name along with John Prentiss’s, and Med presented diplomas to Ford and John with a warm smile and handshake. It was a memorable, touching moment that has remained with Ford through the years and reflects the culture and ethos of his Mercersburg experience.

In Spring 2001 Walter announced his intention to retire a year later, as planned. During his initial interview for the ED position, Walter had emphasized that his time in the role would be limited, since he wished to cap his long career in an educational setting working directly with students, a pursuit that had been interrupted when the Foundation called. A committee was formed—Phil Smith, Phil Havens, Bill Menard, Ford Menard—to search for his replacement. They tapped the network of a trusted independent school colleague who also ran searches (Joyce McCray, formerly of Friends Seminary in NYC) to find a candidate who would bring strong writing skills, technology know-how, a willingness to travel, experience evaluating schools, and a collaborative spirit. Bob Hallett was selected as the new ED, and before long the office moved up Interstate 95 from Washington, DC, where it had been during Walter’s time to Baltimore, where Bob was based.

As Walter prepared to step out of the ED role and onto the board, thorny issues of school leadership and turnover remained. Both the Klingenstein Fellowship program at Teachers College, Columbia University, and a leadership-related collaboration with NAIS were at various stages of development, notable as the first time the Foundation identified a need—school leadership deficits and turnover—and initiated discussion with nonprofit leaders to explore “fundable” solutions. Pat Bassett, slated to become president of NAIS, characterized EEFF as the single most important resource for the independent school community in the way it supported work related to “what we teach and how we teach.” He was also impressed that, rather than being directive with its grants, the

Foundation was encouraging and supportive. Pat went on to report that a recent NAIS study had found a need for stronger professional development for new heads, as well as improved recruitment and search processes for potential leaders.

Walter’s four years of executive leadership had opened the door to new conversations, opportunities, and ways of doing business at the Foundation, all of which focused on catalyzing greater impact. As a new leader stepped into Walter’s shoes, the EE Ford Foundation was poised to step through to a new phase of its history.



BARBARA AND WALTER BURGIN (CENTER)

BUILDING IMPACT: BOB HALLETT (2002–2013)

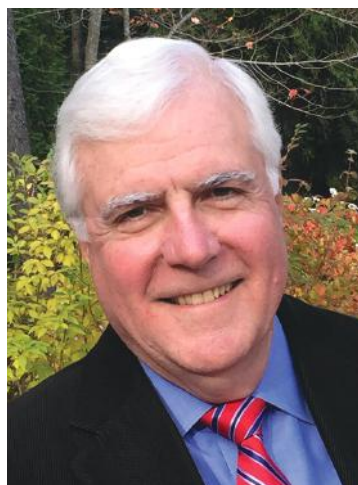
“Bob had a marvelous innate capacity for leadership and did not shy away from moving the Foundation into new fields of activity—notably the Leadership Grants.”

– DAVID HUBBARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER

NEW LEADER, NEW LOCATION

When Bob Hallett applied for the EE Ford Foundation ED position, he already knew he wanted a change after more than 17 years as head of school at St. Paul’s School for Boys in Baltimore—which followed 14 years at Friends’ Central School in Philadelphia in a variety of roles ranging from teacher to assistant headmaster. He knew immediately that the Foundation job was a unique opportunity for someone with his background and, even as he wrote a letter of introduction to convey his passion, suspected that competition would be fierce. His track record at St. Paul’s reflected a willingness to seize the moment and deepen educational opportunities, from building creative partnerships to carrying out strategic initiatives, and he got the job. Bob took over the leadership position and Walter moved to the board in 2002.

During his earliest days as ED, Bob gratefully accepted advice from seasoned colleagues around him. Walter’s assistant, Kelly Heatwole, who continued to work with the Foundation before its move to Baltimore, shared institutional knowledge that helped Bob anchor his understanding of Foundation processes and grantees. And former ED and board member Phil Havens cautioned Bob to make sure he had a comfortable bed to sleep in and a comfortable rental car while traveling!



BOB HALLETT

Bob found the learning curve from school head to foundation head steep and satisfying.

“UNWRITTEN RULES”

Just before Bob became ED, the tech bubble burst, raising new questions about the recently increased grant size and upcoming commitments. In light of the economic challenges and questions, Judy Menard asked to make explicit the Foundation’s long held “unwritten grant rules” to help the board consider adjustments, given prevailing fiscal circumstances. (Interestingly, future ED John Gulla made a similar request when taking on leadership of EEFF more than a decade later. It seems the Foundation’s unwritten internal guidelines surface from time to time, then slip into the background until a new moment when rearticulation is needed.) Bob Hallett joined forces with former EDs Burgin and Havens to document these informal guidelines, which included practices such as “no general or debt reduction support,” “schools must be members of NAIS to be considered,” “school head must be in office at least one full year

“Bob Hallett was (and is!) the best of the best—thoughtful, thorough, always well prepared, with lots of interesting tidbits and a touch of humor to go along with the seriousness of the business at hand—a true gentleman and scholar!”

– NANCY CAVANAUGH, FORMER EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



before we will entertain a proposal,” and more. The board added a new guideline to “take a cautious approach” when school heads were in their final year of service.

A few years later, EEFF’s matching grant policy—a formal requirement of grant requests—came under scrutiny. Originally intended to expand a school’s pool of new donors, it had become commonplace for matching grants to trigger ongoing gifts from existing donors. Furthermore, an economic environment in which large, established schools could tap a single large donor to meet a full \$50K match undermined the spirit of donor diversification that had prompted the policy. The board determined to keep watch in case a change was warranted down the road to align the intention of the policy with its execution by grantee schools.

THE WIDE WORLD OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

As Bob came to understand more about the Foundation’s historic giving, and the breadth and diversity of the independent school community, far beyond what he had seen as a school head—an observation shared by his successor, John Gulla, and by his predecessors—he began

to consider the entirety of EEFF’s grantmaking in relation to impact. As schools applied for similar needs—e.g., professional development, technology, renovation, or compensation—he began to ask himself which of these were likely to tackle those challenges most effectively and, thus, be ideal stewards of EEFF resources. Which school leaders and schools had “the will and the power” to extend themselves beyond their immediate community? In a June 2003 report to the board Bob wrote: “In effect, I am trying to see how our funding dollars may be worth more than 100% on the dollar.” While the match requirement offered one important mechanism for leveraging grant dollars, Bob believed there were others.

Starting in 2004, guests from “the trenches” regularly joined board meetings. While this had occurred sporadically in the past, it now was incorporated as standard practice. In 2004 alone, several cohort members of the NAIS Ford Fellowship Leadership Program spoke at one meeting, while Klingenstein Center head Pearl Kane joined another, along with participants of that leadership program. The final meeting that year included a panel of four school heads (geographically dispersed), two association reps (one from NAIS, another from the Association of

“It was a community board, meaning that people listened to each other. It wasn’t one person trying to run the whole show.”

– PHIL SMITH, FORMER EE FORD BOARD CHAIR



Independent Maryland Schools), and a search consultant from Educators’ Collaborative. This regular dialogue with on-the-ground practitioners helped the board learn firsthand about the impact of the Foundation’s grant dollars, field issues, and trends. At one meeting, guests noted that few incentives existed for school heads to collaborate, and one school leader even suggested that a letter from EEFF to school heads encour-

aging collaborative proposals could conceivably trigger more collaborations across the field.

MORE TRANSITIONS

In April 2003, lifetime member Judy Menard and her husband Lee attended what proved to be their final board meeting. Despite their deep commitment to the Foundation’s mission and pleasure at joining regular meetings of family and colleagues in New York City, Lee was 85 and Judy 79, and travel was proving difficult. Just three years later, in 2006, Judy passed away at age 82. The following year, a \$100,000 grant was made to her alma mater, the John Burroughs School in St. Louis (class of 1941). Supporting development of a wetlands habitat restoration project, the project was a good fit to honor this warm and caring daughter, mother and longstanding Foundation board member whose love of the natural world and wish for a more sustainable future was expansive.



DAVID HUBBARD



CHRIS BROOKS

Other board changes were afoot. In June 2005, David Hubbard (Gill Attfield’s nephew) and Chris

“The passion and engagement when a head of school comes in to tell us about a program is so powerful and interesting.”

– CHRIS BROOKS, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



“ . . . despite a shy and quiet façade that one might call ‘polite’ or ‘proper,’ she was unable and ultimately unwilling to hide the real treasure inside—a warm, open and engaging spirit that treated everyone with dignity and respect, that cared for people and the world around her and that made your little corner of the world a better place.”

– BILL MENARD (FROM JUNE 28, 2006, EULOGY FOR HIS MOTHER, JUDY MENARD)



Brooks (Jill’s son and Ward’s grandson) attended as guests, joining the board soon after. David had first learned about the Foundation when his aunt mentioned, years earlier, that the secondary school he attended (Cambridge School of Weston) had applied for a grant. As a practicing lawyer, David was poised to take on the informal legal advisor role once held by EE Ford’s lawyer Frank Detweiler, then by Detweiler’s protégé George Gillespie. Chris was a Hotchkiss graduate—the school where Bill Fowle had made so many fond memories as athletic director—and had always been interested in carrying on the work of the foundation that meant so much to his mother and grandfather. Chris’s first meeting was his grandfather’s last. As Ward Reighley stepped away after nearly 50 years of service, he recalled arriving at the Foundation as a sprightly 39-year-old (now approaching 90!). He underscored the vital importance of having a skilled executive director managing the board so that the Foundation mission could continue to evolve and thrive.

In 2007, George Gillespie officially resigned from the board, and Walter Burgin succeeded Phil Smith as chair. Concurrent with George’s being named honorary trustee as he left the board, David Hubbard was tapped to draft an amendment to the Foundation’s Code of Regulations regarding honorary membership, since this title had never been officially defined (e.g., election, term limits, procedures, impact on board composition). One more informal Foundation practice would now be codified. The next long-serving



BILL MENARD WITH AVEY, TEDDY AND LINDSEY MENARD

Transformation CATALYZED

A LARGE AND AMBITIOUS SCHOOL FOUNDED BY THE HAWAIIAN MONARCHY IN 1863, 'Iolani today has more than 2,000 students of diverse racial and religious heritage attending the school's 13 grade levels (K-12). 'Iolani's Sullivan Center facility, opened in 2013, has emerged as a resource that benefits not only the school, but the broader Honolulu community. It integrates engineering, creative uses of wide-ranging maker space tools, design thinking, team-oriented problem-solving pedagogy and more.

One notable Sullivan Center partnership project paired an 'Iolani-hired research scientist with students. Six years, 225 teachers and more than 1,200 students from a dozen other schools later, students and teachers had conducted a species census, monitored water quality and contributed research, published and advocated politically for the environmental health of the ahupua'a (watershed) where the school is located. With a particular focus on analyzing invasive species and restoring



the Ala Wai watershed, the project was awarded a Traditional Grant (\$48,751) in 2016 that added a research position to support and expand both the work and the benefits to the community. The program eventually involved more than 500 STEM teachers throughout the Honolulu area.

An Educational Leadership Grant in 2019 (\$182,200) built on ‘Iolani’s commitment to Citizen Science by supporting a genomics and bioethics component, work that the school shares freely with its private/parochial and public school partners. Through these partnerships, students from across all schools work with high-level genome technology and have access to research mentors at nearby universities and labs. The extraordinary field experience students gain will be a valuable asset, should they go on to professionally pursue research science. The curriculum developed in the funded bioethics component was slated to become open source and available to all, once complete.

Taken together, these grants illustrate one way that Foundation-funded programs support replicable program models that enable well-resourced schools to extend the work and benefit of these resources beyond their student populations to community members and students at surrounding schools.



“It was wonderful to work with my father, and to see him in a different light—making decisions in a business atmosphere.”

– JILL CHRISTENSEN, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



board member to leave was Phil Smith, who stepped off the board in 2010 after more than 20 years of service. He did so as another educator joined who, like Phil, had never served as EEFF executive director.

Recently retired Philips Exeter school head Tyler (Ty) Tingley had previously led the Blake School in Minneapolis—where future EE Ford ED John Gulla subsequently spent 14 years—and, before that, was at Kingswood-Oxford School in West Hartford, Connecticut, where his teaching career started. After retiring from Philips Exeter, Ty helped build a school from the ground up, consulting in the development of Avenues The World School and brought to the board a lifelong interest in what helps make a school more functional and more enriching for its students. A new phase of building out the educator side of the board had begun.

SHAPING THE FUTURE: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS

By 2006, Bob had several years’ experience under his belt and was ready to shepherd the Foundation into a new phase of development. During Walter’s ED tenure, the grant range had expanded upward to a ceiling of \$100,000, and several memorable grants had resulted. Yet too often, it seemed that schools requested the maximum amount without considering how their project could have broader impact. During this

same period, Bob found himself inspired by NAIS conference speaker Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don’t*. That experience was a gateway toward larger ambitions, prompting the BHAG (big hairy audacious goal) discussion that took place at the Prouts Neck retreat several years later.

Striving to do more, Phil Smith and Bob Hallett brought a bold new concept to the board: Why not use one board meeting a year to consider requests with broader purpose at a significantly larger dollar amount (\$200K–\$250K)? Bob, who regularly spent time with trusted field colleagues, had begun bouncing off them new grantmaking ideas that were surfacing among board members. Having gained uniformly positive feedback about the transformative potential for such an approach when floating it with school heads and others, he had even witnessed a group of faculty visibly energized by the chance to dream beyond day-to-day limitations. The overwhelmingly enthusiastic response strengthened his resolve in bringing the idea to the board, believing that such an approach was precisely what private foundation dollars can and should do: help practitioners push beyond the usual “lines” that bound them to test and stretch in innovative new directions that may better serve their constituencies.

Not surprisingly, the new proposal was met with interest as well as concern. Any change this substantial brought possibility along with potential costs. Fewer grants would likely be made. Would the new program signal that the Foundation was straying from its historic purpose? The board agreed that their primary consideration was impact. The core question that had surfaced so clearly in the Impact Survey undertaken in 1989 during Phil Havens's time, was asked again: *Were Foundation dollars producing the desired outcomes?*

Over several meetings, the board grappled with the questions before it, using its now time-tested approach of engaging in ongoing discussion to build consensus. They looked at the financial realities, noting that a \$50,000 grant in the 1970s meant something whereas, in 2006, it would take nearly \$200,000 to pack the same punch. They considered whether larger schools, already well resourced, would be unfairly advantaged by this "large grant" approach. They wondered how and whether these larger grants could foster collaboration between schools or prompt recipients to share their experiences with other schools so new practices could be replicated. As part of this process, an ad hoc committee comprised of Bill Menard, Walter Burgin and Phil Smith formulated a series of questions and recommendations for the board to consider:

- Should there be a limit to the size?
- How to identify schools to apply? (An open RFP was beyond staff capacity.)
- Can schools apply for regular grants if they are not selected?



JIM LARGEY

- How much does school leadership matter?
- Must a school match 1:1, the existing practice for most grants?

In the end, the EE Ford Educational Leadership Grant program (ELG) was approved, with a first round of grants to be considered in 2008. A Selection Committee of board members was appointed to shepherd the process. Twenty schools were invited to submit two-page concept papers describing projects that could respond to the following framing question: We see the current world climate to be increasingly challenging. What challenge(s) do you see your students facing to have success in an ever-changing world? How would you address these concerns?

Of the 19 schools that responded with ideas, the Selection Committee chose six promising finalists to present full proposals the following spring. These presentations, originally made by heads of school only (10 years later, the board agreed that one additional staff leader could co-present), have become essential annual opportunities for the full board to directly interact with practitioners,

deepening their knowledge and understanding of what happens at the school level. Among the criteria for evaluating school ELG proposals were the importance of work proposed, potential for transformative effect and potential for replication in other educational settings. The inaugural Educational Leadership grantees, each of whom received \$250,000, included: Garrison Forest School, George School, Germantown Friends School, Hathaway Brown School, and The Lawrenceville School.

As word of the new leadership grant program spread, inquiries flowed in. And the Foundation's efforts to spread word about its new funding program broadened awareness of its regular grant program as well (now called Traditional Grants), with inquiries and applications increasing over time. For the next several years, at each year's April meeting, the board would formulate a framing question for the following year's ELG. By December 2009, the Foundation was on its third round and ready to "go public" with the program, adding an information page on its website. As of December 31, 2022, 58 Educational Leadership Grants have been made totaling \$14,500,000 and leveraging roughly another \$20,000,000.

MEETING IN MAINE: PROUTS NECK RETREAT, SEPTEMBER 2011

Early in 2010, the idea of a retreat surfaced once again, as it had occasionally over the years. Recent implementation of the ELG program, and the fact that Bob Hallett was approaching ten years on the job, persuaded the board that the time was right. A planning committee was formed (Walter Burgin, Phil Havens, David Hubbard, Bill Menard and Bob Hallett) and the Prouts Neck

retreat of September 2011 was the result. The Black Point Inn accommodations in the coastal town of Scarborough, Maine, were facilitated by George Gillespie, who hosted a dinner for his former board colleagues at his summer home.

In preparation, trustees read the Jim Collins monograph *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* and a brief paper prepared by Tom Wilcox that provided historical context about the Foundation and "the state of the schools." Tom, then president of the Baltimore Community Foundation, served as retreat facilitator—or "agitator," as he preferred. With his long track record of independent school experience, including serving as head of school at Concord Academy, Tom pressed the board to think deeply and expansively about the Foundation's goals in ways that fulfilled the spirit of those goals, not simply the letter of past practice. (For instance, when the subject of serving 9–12 graders was emphasized as important, Tom, as provocateur, challenged the board to consider whether key aspects of serving the 9–12 constituency might be fulfilled through increasing the readiness of younger students.)

More than 20 years had passed since the retreat chaired by Larry Hlavacek, and just two board members present in Princeton were at Prouts Neck (Gill Attfield and Jill Christensen), so the retreat began with a look back. Throughout the meeting, facilitator-agitator Wilcox prodded board members to think and act creatively in carrying out fidelity to the mission. John Prentiss noted that his grandfather Med and Mr. Ford were people who wanted to get things done, and if a 90-degree turn was needed to achieve that, they wouldn't balk.

MISSION FROM THE PROUT'S NECK RETREAT: The mission of The Edward E. Ford Foundation is to strengthen and support independent secondary schools and to challenge and inspire them to leverage their unique talents, expertise and resources to advance teaching and learning throughout this country by supporting and disseminating best practices, by supporting efforts to develop and implement models of sustainability, and by encouraging collaboration with other institutions.

PROUTS NECK, SEPTEMBER 2011

As the board contemplated “big hairy audacious goals” (BHAGs), there was shared skepticism that a group of non-educators could successfully take this on. When the topic of financing potential new strategies was discussed, JP Morgan¹⁶ Trust Officer Jim Largey painted a picture of future resources through financial projections, prompting the board to have one of its periodic “perpetuity or spend down” discussions. Wilcox suggested that “decision follows mission.” In other words, figure out what you wish to do, and then consider how—and on what timetable—your resources will support those goals. In principle, the board indicated a willingness to spend down if the most promising approach warranted it.

Through the course of the meeting, the board discussed themes of: financial viability and sustainability, scaling solutions, faculty, risk-taking, and new models for public/private relationships. A task force was formed to dig into possible BHAG projects. (Walter Burgin, Bill Menard, Ford Menard, John Prentiss, Bob Hallett). The final discussion delved into governance and leader-

ship, considering ways to ensure that the board had sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of schools and a solid, sustained process for recruiting family. On the leadership side, Bob Hallett made clear his intention to retire within a couple of years, indicating a need for transition planning.

Two months after the retreat, the board approved—for the first time in its history—a mission statement and policy guidelines. The clear language of its new guidelines animated the Foundation’s values.



JOHN GULLA AND TOM WILCOX

¹⁶ In 1991, Manufacturers Hanover Trust bank merged into Chemical Banking Corp; in 1996 Chemical Bank bought Chase Manhattan Bank; and in 2000 Chase merged with JP Morgan & Co. to form JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Transformation CATALYZED

A RESPECTED EE FORD GRANTEE SINCE 1981, HATHAWAY BROWN WAS AN EARLY EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANT RECIPIENT IN 2008 with its project to coalesce the school's various learning centers within a new framework called the Institute for 21st Century Learning. The Institute would facilitate more seamless and cohesive learning, ensuring that students had the tools they needed to experiment in ways that acknowledge the complexity of the world outside its doors, complexity that a typical high school curriculum cannot accommodate.

In 2010, two years after this new framework was in place, the school kicked off an annual Educational Innovation Summit designed to “lead, learn and share.” Recognizing that the independent school community has historically invested time, idealism and money into helping schools and students in the public sector, the summit convened public and independent educators to discuss how, given constraints of educational systems and structures, teachers and administrators could cultivate dynamic school environments where experimentation and excellence were the norm. Annual summits addressed both practical matters and larger philosophical questions.



After successful summits in 2010 and 2011, Hathaway Brown was ready to up the ante in 2012. Luminaries like Tom Friedman, Linda Darling-Hammond, Paul Tough and others delivered keynotes, with a “who’s who” roster of independent school practitioners spearheading workshops and panel discussions. An EE Ford Traditional Grant of \$75,000 subsidized Hathaway Brown’s ability to enlist top-notch keynote speakers and presenters and to market the event widely in order to assemble the broad and diverse constituency of skilled, thoughtful participants necessary for achieving the school’s goals for the two-day gathering.

The goal of each summit is to emerge with concrete collaborative action plans for the future by actively engaging the educational community to grapple with tough questions.



Transformation CATALYZED

FOR 30 YEARS, FROM INCEPTION THROUGH THE 1990S, EE FORD GRANTS PACKED REMARKABLE PUNCH FOR RECIPIENT SCHOOLS. Yet as the years passed, the Foundation's ability to meaningfully fill perennial gaps were shrinking alongside the dwindling value of each grant dollar. Striving for impact, the staff and board were determined that the Foundation's limited resources should continue making a substantive difference for schools—how to achieve this goal was a recurring question.

Answers have percolated in a variety of forms in the years following the Foundation's early experimentation with \$100,000 grants during Walter Burgin's tenure and Bob Hallett's subsequent work to guide the board toward Educational Leadership Grants (ELGs). At today's EE Ford Foundation, John Gulla is combining decades of the Foundation's grantmaking experience and steadily growing grantee engagement to lead the charge toward support that creates domino and multiplier effects.

Take, for example, University Liggett School located outside Detroit, Michigan, the recipient of eight EE Ford grants across 40 years. Most fell in the \$25,000–\$50,000 range, and most were designed to support (and often, through the match, to endow) professional development, curricular or scholarship opportunities. In 2020, a Traditional Grant to University Liggett (\$100,000) supported the school's exploration of a place-based approach to studying United States history. The successful Place-Based Humanities (PBH) Learning Institute transformed the school's fundamental pedagogy in history by creating openings for a similar approach in other disciplines. It also led the school to establish a National Institute on Place-Based Humanities with the help of a second, larger Foundation investment (\$250,000 ELG in 2022). School head Bart Bronk uses the idea of Ebmodaakowet—an archer shooting arrows of knowledge into the future—to describe the lasting effect fostered through these grant investments.

In another example, the all-girls Greenwich Academy (Greenwich, Connecticut) followed a similar trajectory of modest-size grants for traditional purposes over many years. Then, in 2014, the Academy received \$50,000 to support the launch of Girls Advancing in STEM (GAINS), a network promoting research and other science undertakings for girls. The resounding—and enduring—success of this local network led to an ELG four years later (\$250,000) that took the GAINS network national.

In Los Angeles, Wildwood School received a 2015 traditional grant to help fund the first of three academic “institutes” directed and run by students. Driven by and tapping the enthusiasm of students' sense of agency when pursuing passion projects, this work led to a larger ELG three years later, which further expanded both the model and the partnerships that weave through them.

FROM OPERATION TO TRANSFORMATION

A \$50,000 grant to Winchester Thurston (WT) in 2004 helped fund The City as Our Campus pilot program that linked curriculum with locally available resources in Pittsburgh. Today, City as Campus has been trademarked by WT following its work—supported by a subsequent \$250,000 ELG—to thread the approach throughout the entire school. Winchester Thurston now helps other schools consider how such an approach could manifest in their own schools and cities. A 2017 conference subsidized by EE Ford (\$50,000 for speaker participation and marketing costs) convened school leaders and faculty to help these practitioners generate community-based learning programs using best practices and lessons learned. The Foundation has received—and funded—proposals from educators in other parts of the country, as practitioners creatively adapt and adopt for their own settings the concepts of place-based curricula inspired by programs like The City as Our Campus and Place-Based Humanities.

While the examples above feature a pattern of Traditional followed by Educational Leadership Grant, abundant stand-alone grants to schools have also contributed to transformational outcomes. For example:

THE GUNSTON SCHOOL (CENTERVILLE, MD)

Launched *Chesapeake Watershed Semester*, now an ongoing immersive learning component

DUBLIN SCHOOL (DUBLIN, NH)

Established a Fellowship Program partnership with 10 New England boarding schools and Dartmouth through which learning cohorts benefit historically underrepresented students

BOSQUE SCHOOL (ALBUQUERQUE, NM)

Established a three-week immersive learning program

FRIENDS' CENTRAL (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

Established *Consent in Healthy Relationships* curriculum that is fostering a national dialogue

HARLEY SCHOOL (ROCHESTER, NY)

Developed a PK–12 environmental sustainability curriculum

FUGEEES ACADEMY (ATLANTA, GA; ENROLLS ONLY REFUGEE STUDENTS)

Established a program to ensure their alumni go to college and emerge debt-free

UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL (SAN FRANCISCO, CA)

Research into creating a “thrive” index to broaden how success is viewed

And many more.

IN PURSUIT OF THE BHAG

At its June 2012 board meeting, three school heads joined the board meeting to speak about challenges facing the independent school community, the current state of American education more broadly, and ideas for EEFF's role going forward. Among the guests was Scott Looney, head of the Hawken School, whose comments foreshadowed his future work with the Mastery Transcript Project. He suggested that EEFF funding was behind 75% of the innovations showing up in independent schools, and then bemoaned the singular educational focus on college admissions, holding that more important than college admission prep is the

need to build and support creative, flexible individuals who can think about complex problems in new ways.

The Hathaway Brown Innovation Summit held that same year (see Page 60) had people thinking about innovation, and it was beginning to feel like the stars were aligning for a BHAG “intervention,” with the independent school community actively discussing partnership and ambitious goals. The confluence between this trend and a strong desire on the part of the board to hear directly from school heads themselves led to a school heads summit convened by the Foundation in September 2014. But before that, another “changing of the guard” was about to take place.



MARK REED, NICOLE FURLONGE AND PEARL KANE

FORTIFYING COLLABORATION: JOHN GULLA (2013 TO DATE)

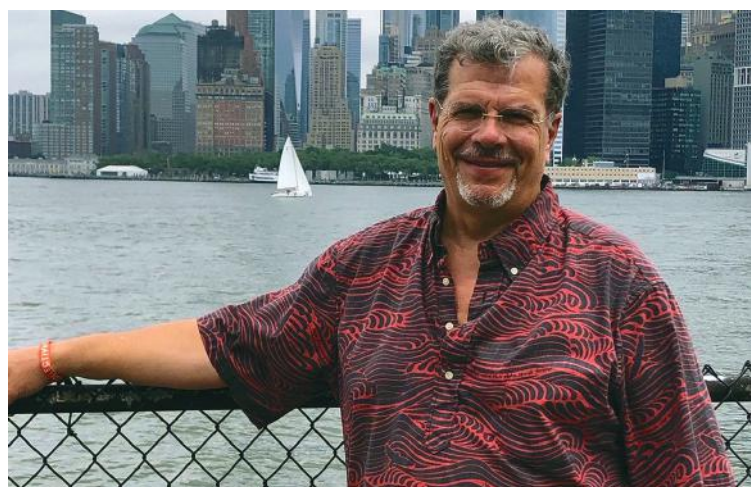
“John sees the system, not just the tools; sees not just the classroom but how organizational development and systems, technology, news, research, practice, policy and the rest fit together in an educational ecosystem that supports student experience and student learning.”

– PETER NILSSON, HEAD OF KINGS ACADEMY (JORDAN),
FORMERLY AT DEERFIELD ACADEMY

EXPANDING POSSIBILITIES

Clarity forged through the 2011 Prouts Neck retreat process immediately served the Foundation in its search for a leader to replace Bob Hallett. The search committee (Walter Burgin, Nancy Cavanaugh, Bill Menard, Ford Menard) enlisted the help of former school head Earl Ball, who had come to know the Foundation while serving at Penn Charter, a Foundation grant recipient. Earl, a well-regarded independent school colleague with a wide network across the school spectrum, now worked as a consultant doing head of school searches. The Position Statement that Earl developed in conjunction with the ED search committee grew directly from the board’s work at Prouts Neck. The Foundation could now convey in more pointed language its organizational profile and aspirations.

Widespread interest in the job was evidenced by the number of applicants; candidate John Gulla prevailed. With nearly 35 years of leadership experience at independent schools, John came to the Foundation from fourteen years leading The Blake School in Minneapolis and nine years in a leadership role at Riverdale Country School



JOHN GULLA

before that. The opening words to John’s “statement of educational philosophy” (a required element of the application) were: “To be well-educated is to be free.” He described how his long tenure in schools had helped him understand that, rather than simply looking for answers, he needed to ask better and better questions. This spirit of inquiry was just what the Foundation sought as it continued to stretch beyond its historic boundaries.

Part of what intrigued John about the position was a sense of ambition around the ways EEFF might build upon its formidable reputation to further amplify impact. He remembers discussing this aspiration with Board Chair Walter Burgin. John, like Bob Hallett before him, suspected that EEFF could contribute to strengthening the sector in ways that extended beyond grants alone. Since stepping into the ED role, John has been activating some of those possibilities. His first job, however, was to listen and learn from the board what the Foundation wanted for itself.

Transformation CATALYZED

WAYNFLETE SCHOOL IS ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING. Its head of school describes it as being “as Quakerly as you can be without actually being a Friends School.” Foundation grants received between 1976 and 2003 were largely emblematic of their time. Long committed to diversity, and located in a fairly diverse city, the state of Maine beyond Portland is primarily white. Waynflete has done intentional work through the years to diversify its community, reaching out in particular to local refugee communities.

A Traditional Grant of \$50,000 made to Waynflete in 2016 helped the school build capacity for interpersonal dialogue among members of the community and share its findings with other schools, and became the seed of a bigger idea. An expansion of a New England Youth Identity Summit (NEYIS), this work was undertaken in partnership with the nonprofit Seeds of Peace. NEYIS had drawn more than 300 students from New England to the Waynflete campus for a two-day program, and the successfully funded expansion built upon the school’s Racial Awareness at Waynflete program. A subsequent Educational Leadership Grant (ELG) of \$250,000 three years later combined NEYIS with the school’s pilot Can We? program, the successful product of onetime funding from another source.



The underlying premise of Can We? was to “value diversity as a condition of excellence.” For the program, Waynflete had brought together about 30 students from Waynflete, six public schools in Maine and one parochial school in Massachusetts. The students debated public policy issues, found common ground with an emphasis on the perspective of their generation, then posed questions to gubernatorial candidates who were up for election. ELG funding from EE Ford enabled them to bring together and formalize the NEYIS and Can We? Programs under the umbrella of a new Center for Civic Engagement, designed to sustain these programs and others like them into the future. At the heart of the Center for Civic Engagement lies the question “How can we learn from those who think differently from us, from those with whom we disagree?”

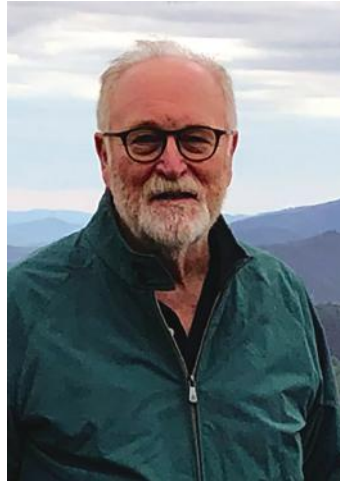
As an independent school, Waynflete was well suited to spearhead the Center, a role that would be much more problematic for a public school partner, given the program’s political facets (despite its purposefully nonpartisan design). Partners from conservative and liberal communities alike credit Waynflete for doing the hard work of fully engaging across partisan divides to achieve meaningful dialogue between students.

Another encouraging sign that reflects the potentially transformational nature of this work: Even as Waynflete was seeking EE Ford funds for program expansion, the school was actively fielding requests from other independent schools across the country for advice on initiating similar models within their own school communities.





KEITH SHAHAN



DAVID GRANT

AMPLIFYING IMPACT

As work got underway in July 2013, John’s first job was to move the Foundation office to Brooklyn, New York, from Maine, where it had been housed following Bob Hallett’s move there in 2006. Diving directly into school visits, he quickly learned—as others had before him—how much bigger, broader and more diverse the world of independent schools was than he had known. He’d imagined the four schools within his firsthand experience were quite different from one another when, in reality, they were cut from the same cloth. It also became apparent to him that school visits not only expanded his understanding of each individual

school but, in the aggregate, illuminated field-wide trends and challenges.

John’s first years were spent getting familiar with schools and applicants while learning how the Foundation operated: its practices, rhythms, board member skills, personalities, and culture. He began to understand the “unwritten rules” around grantmaking choices and decisions, and learned how board members collaborated with each other, and with staff. He dug into technical administrative issues, determining where the Foundation’s information management systems might be reinforced. Several board changes occurred in these years, and a “Head of School Summit” was held, a convening as illuminating for John as it was for the board. Through these years, even as the board inched toward realizing its goal of making a major grant investment—the big, hairy, audacious goal discussed at Prouts Neck—the Educational Leadership grants process was undergoing tweaks.

Underlying John’s work was a drive toward leverage and impact. A priority from the Foundation’s earliest days, it was now John’s job to figure out how to make the most of the Foundation’s resources, relationships and reputation in 2013 and beyond. The answer lay in fortifying partner-

“The utility of this foundation is not diminishing. With everything going on in education, what we do is more and more important, given the diversity of ideas that independent schools can foster.”

– DAVID HUBBARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



ships and collaborations across the independent school landscape and deriving greater impact through stronger engagement, focused grant opportunities and reinforced infrastructure.

IMPACT *through* ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with schools individually when grant proposals were in play was a long-standing practice, invaluable for gaining insight, building relationships, and assessing strengths and needs of schools and school leaders. Through the years, EEFF EDs had leveraged attendance at the annual NAIS conference to meet with school heads, present information on panels, and bring EEFF board members into direct discussion with representatives of schools the Foundation served. The desire for greater impact meant the stakes around engagement needed to be raised.

ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CONVENING: 2014 SCHOOL HEADS SUMMIT

The school heads summit of September 2014 became John's first opportunity to convene educational practitioners for a robust "state of the field" discussion. The gathering brought together eleven school heads from nine states representing day, boarding, co-ed and single-sex schools with 9 of 12 EEFF board member "observers." Facilitator Keith Shahan brought both micro and macro field perspectives, since

he had formerly served as head of John Burroughs School in St. Louis and as executive director of the Independent School Association of the Central States. The summit focused on exploring "the challenges and opportunities facing independent schools over the next five to ten years," and its structured conversations fell into three sessions: People; Programs; and Financial Models of Independent Schools.

Across two days, frank discussion ensued on subjects such as faculty shifts, parental expectations and students as "digital citizens." School heads delved into pedagogy, globalism, views on liberal arts and the exploding role of technology tools. And, while the subject of financial models flowed through the entire summit, the session focused squarely on this topic generated discussion of "value vs. cost" as a central theme. Questions were raised about society's growing income disparity; philanthropy; the role of debt; and the question of an independent school education as "product" (i.e., luxury item) or "service" (i.e., need). Not surprisingly, the summit raised more questions than it answered. Still, participating school heads found it uplifting and affirming, appreciating the chance for "deep dive" conversations with colleagues facing similar challenges. For their part, board members found the session instructive, and John, who was early in his journey straddling the worlds of school leader and foundation head, found it valuable not only for the school-related information—about which John was still quite current—but for the board's opportunity to observe a group of confident, outspoken leaders interacting with one another as they batted around serious issues of the day.

*“The Foundation has moved from simplicity to complexity:
Now board members get antsy if we don’t dive into
discussions of education!”*

– TY TINGLEY, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



Continuing to annually convene heads of ELG recipient schools in conjunction with the NAIS conference helps EEFF stay in sync with hot topics of discussion and concern. It also creates openings for board members to familiarize themselves with the people behind the ideas and schools discussed at meetings. A convening of school heads in 2021—a virtual meeting due to the ongoing pandemic—was especially memorable for the extraordinary level of participation, breadth and quality of discussion, and frankness with which school heads shared and engaged.

ENGAGEMENT ACROSS SECTORS:
SCHOOL HEADS, BOARD MEMBERS,
AND CURRENT TRENDS

To keep the board apprised of school trends, John regularly sends articles and “thought pieces” in an effort to engage the board between meetings and deepen its knowledge around topics of concern to the independent school community. Adding to that knowledge are the periodic conversations board members have with school heads. These take a variety of forms. School leaders sometimes attend board meetings as invited guests, engaging with the board in discussion about what they are seeing in and across the educational sector. Leaders also come before the board to present and discuss project proposals,

another chance to deepen board understanding. And of course, the annual convenings of ELG school heads previously mentioned present another opportunity for interaction.

Further interaction results when board members participate in school visits. Board members who have accompanied Bob Hallett or John Gulla on these visits describe them as enlightening and energizing. Through such visits, board members increase not only their background on individual schools but gain valuable insight on the texture of their ED’s work, field knowledge, and relationship management skills. They see firsthand how that ED interacts with members of a school community, from students, faculty, and other staff to the school head—and how each of those constituents perceive the ED and the Foundation. All board members who have joined such school visits cite them as powerful experiences, well worth the time.

From the vantage point of school leaders, presenting projects to the board typically generates a spirit of inquiry—even pushback—from board members, which these leaders appreciate. The board’s diverse backgrounds provoke new and different questions. Debra Wilson, ED of Southern Association of Independent Schools and, as of February 2023, president-elect of NAIS, sees



TY TINGLEY

the balance of family and educator members as healthy, with family members bringing a useful “gut check” to discussions. Says Debra: “If they say ‘this makes no sense to me,’ I need to find new ways to describe what a project is, and why it is important.” Such conversations shed light on outcome measurables Debra may wish to track once the project is underway.

DEEPENING BOARD ENGAGEMENT: BEEKMAN RETREAT

During John Gulla’s first five years as ED (2013–2017), change had transpired at the Foundation, from increasing average grant size to the much larger CIG grant investment for the Mastery Transcript Consortium. (Read more on Page 77.) The guidelines had been tweaked to optimize creativity and impact around grant requests. Two educators and a family member had joined the board, and the Foundation was building greater visibility with a view toward expanding its reach. Concurrent with these internal changes, the school world outside was weathering expanding tensions related to the country’s fractious political

climate, tensions affecting the daily lives of schools and their extended communities.

NAIS president Donna Orem joined the board meeting in June 2017 to describe how these emerging trends were affecting schools. Among other things, NAIS was seeing a rapid rise of micro-school models driven in part by parents whose “co-creation” sensibilities combined with a desire for affordable independent school options (typically achieved through reduced infrastructure and administration costs). Big data and online learning were also trending. New leadership challenges were triggering rapid turnover at schools where new heads had replaced recently retired, longstanding heads, and tensions were rising between boards comprised of alumni with traditional ideas bumping up against new leaders—often women and people of color—who were introducing new thinking and practices. Board member Reveta Bowers noted that 63 schools were expected to have interim heads at the start of the 2018–19 school year. Could the Foundation play a constructive role and support schools in new ways during these rocky times?

Underscoring the value of periodically reaffirming the Foundation mission and contemplating the future, Chair Bob Hallett suggested a retreat. Liz Duffy, David Hubbard and Bob Hallett worked with John Gulla to plan what became the Beekman retreat, held in September 2018, seven years after Prouts Neck had done so much to chart the Foundation’s course in the intervening years.

The 2018 Beekman retreat had two sets of goals: 1) Affirm (or amend) the mission, review current policies, including spend rate and grant cycles; and 2) Consider the EEFF’s standing as

“Innovation and ideas come not from the lane of what we’re doing, but from outside the lane.”

– DARRYL J. FORD, HEAD OF SCHOOL, WILLIAM PENN CHARTER SCHOOL



a family foundation and contemplate board succession planning, which can be tricky for family foundations. As a member of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation board, Liz Duffy had worked with David Grant, Dodge’s former President and CEO. His independent school and private foundation experience made David a good choice to guide conversations of reflection and action, and he agreed to facilitate the two-day retreat.

In contemplating the Foundation’s mission, one board member interviewed prior to the retreat had remarked that “our mission isn’t clear, but it’s shared,” while another observed that “we have hard-and-fast rules that we break all the time.” Discussion of the Foundation’s grants suggested a wide range of views of the effectiveness of ELGs vis-à-vis Traditional Grants. Some felt that collaboration led to greater success. The Foundation’s added value beyond grant dollars also was explored, as was the question of nurturing more cross-fertilization in both the educational and philanthropic communities. Foundation EDs had played multifaceted roles through the years, providing detailed guidance to school heads, connecting schools with one another when collaboration might be fruitful. Through discussion, the board was more explicit with John, encouraging him to attend and speak at field-related gatherings. There was a strong belief that this would

help to engage an ever-widening range of practitioners around the Foundation’s work and goals.

Former board chair (and informal Foundation sage) Walter Burgin suggested that the board might wish to structure more regular opportunities to reflect with intention on its work, continuing to explore larger questions of impact as real-time problems arose. As board member Reveta Bowers said: The Foundation should more regularly “practice what it preaches” to school heads and boards about making time for self-reflective, generative discussion. The key outcome of this conversation was an adjusted meeting schedule that, after committee follow-up work, introduced a “Flexible Agenda” meeting into its annual schedule of three board meetings. The new approach is already bearing fruit.

The board dug into other ways to improve the Foundation’s efforts, including shortening the mission statement for greater clarity and continuing the practice of having field practitioners join board conversations. They thought about ways to leverage the ED’s time so that there would be sufficient space for other mission-impact pursuits. Some felt that modification of the Foundation’s staffing structure to support this goal might be in order.

“There’s a kind of fearlessness of heads once they’ve been in place awhile; the Foundation mirrors that fearlessness.”

– PAT BASSETT, PAST PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



PAT BASSETT

At the retreat, the board affirmed its wish to continue in perpetuity (i.e., not to spend down) and discussed its identity as a family foundation. Facilitator David Grant asked direct questions such as: Should this remain a family Foundation; what is family; and what do you bring to the meeting? Family members described having been inspired to join by a fellow family member who had served before them. The then current mix of eight family members and five educators achieved the goal of combining field expertise with “grounding” in family history, stories, and ethos. The board concluded that it wished to remain a family majority board (with family defined as EE Ford family members and their descendants). “Candidates should have a deep,

BEEKMAN RETREAT TAKEAWAYS

MISSION STATEMENT (REVISED)

The Edward E. Ford Foundation seeks to improve secondary education by supporting U.S. independent schools and encouraging promising practices.

FLEXIBLE AGENDA APPROACH

Instead of two Traditional Grant Agendas and one ELG Agenda every year, a new approach would now include one Flexible Agenda that centered around an emergent need. It might be devoted to a Collaborative Innovation opportunity, topical discussion about field-based needs (and possible solutions), or some other timely purpose. If there was need for a second Traditional or ELG Agenda in a given year, the Flexible Agenda could be devoted to that purpose. This flexibility could also allow for consideration of “Special Grants.” The board set an intention of dedicating at least one board meeting every two years to thoughtful space for discussion and action.

abiding interest in the mission and a desire and willingness to serve, someone who resonates with the mission and would be a loyal and regular participant in the work.”

Three committees emerged from the retreat (mission statement, strategic planning/calendar, and family nomination) to carry forward ideas generated, with 9 of 13 board members agreeing to populate these committees and activate goals. Within two months, the mission and calendar committees had presented proposals for a shortened mission statement and a flexible agenda calendar. Work on board development continued.

ENGAGEMENT THROUGH VISIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP

If collaboration was integral to impact, John knew that expansion of EEFF’s visibility would be a critical ingredient in that mix. The Foundation already had an excellent reputation in the field—and was valued by many as one of very few private foundations funding independent schools (and the only one focused solely on an independent school constituency). Still, many schools across the country had never applied and others had never heard of the EE Ford Foundation. How to spread the word beyond the usual suspects?

In part, the answer has been for John Gulla, who came into the ED job widely respected in the independent school field, to write thoughtful articles for placement in a variety of trade journals, provide input to colleagues, and accept speaking opportunities that enabled him to engage different audiences. Through regular articles in the quarterly magazine *Independent*

School, which usually also included a list of all EE Ford grant recipients since the last such listing in that publication, through direct communication to the Heads of School of all EEFF-eligible institutions on periodic changes in the Foundation’s practice, through more than 60 presentations, some as keynotes, others as workshops, at state, regional and national conferences, on panels, podcasts or webinars, the executive director has been raising awareness of, and inviting eligible schools to engage with, the Foundation. At the 2018 Beekman retreat, the board affirmed its wish for John to continue participating in and generating opportunities like these to the extent his time allowed.

IMPACT *through*
FOCUSED GRANT
OPPORTUNITIES

As the Foundation has diversified the types of grants it offers, while retaining space for the project grants that help schools fund “what they need,” it has begun to layer different levels of impact within the independent school ecosystem.

IMPACT THROUGH EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS 2.0

The addition of ELGs in 2008 had catalyzed a number of significant improvements at individual schools and more broadly in the independent school world. As of 2016, nearly ten years after the program began, 34 grants totaling \$8.5 million

had leveraged another \$10 million in matching funds for recipient schools. An ELG study (undertaken with design help of school heads who had been ELG grantees) found most of these grants were considered very successful. Leadership changes sometimes caused disappointing results, since incoming heads tended to be less invested in projects their predecessors had initiated. Success aside, the board wondered whether the original burst of ELG creativity had waned.

One disconnect related to the process: Length restrictions on preliminary proposals sometimes left the Selection Committee feeling that the strength and creativity of ideas presented in preliminary proposals was less inventive than hoped. Yet finalists who subsequently presented to the board were overwhelmingly approved, suggesting that the combination of fully fleshed-out proposals and in-person presentations accompanied by dialogue brought proposals to life more fully for the board. John saw room to infuse new energy into the program, starting with the “invitation only” application process in place when he arrived.

There had always been an implicit awkwardness in inviting schools to apply for a substantial grant when some percentage would be denied funding. John’s hunch was that enabling schools to take the lead could generate greater excitement, innovation and impact. Just as the Traditional Grants relied on the wisdom of schools to know what they needed, school-initiated ELG proposals could reflect a similar wisdom. One hesitation was that a finding from the ELG survey reported that receiving an invitation from EEFF to participate often was a source of school pride and prestige. Wanting to avoid the unintended consequence

of subtracting an element that schools valued, the board agreed to the revised approach, asking John to closely monitor outcomes. In time, John’s growing connections in depth and number with school heads has increasingly allowed him to suggest to some leaders that they might consider pursuing an ELG—creating a hybrid approach where some schools self-select into the ELG program and others are encouraged to apply.

FROM BHAG TO CIG: ADDING IMPACT THROUGH COLLABORATION

Within a year of John’s arrival, the board had begun approving annual fund transfers to a donor-advised fund (DAF), mindful that a large grant investment might be around the corner. Doing so allowed the Foundation to meet its federally required annual payout while ensuring that adequate resources would be in place when the time came. This also allowed the Foundation to pay out grants from the DAF in down markets, avoiding locking in losses. It took several more years of planning and board discussion to move BHAG intention to action. Throughout, John continued learning about the external landscape—i.e., independent school needs and wants—while gaining insight internally, particularly around the board’s collaborative decision-making style.

Early in 2015, when the board tasked John with developing parameters for the BHAG initiative, Board Chair Walter Burgin used his authority to stress the importance of board members actively engaging with John once a draft was ready. He sensed the board may have been looking for John to deliver a BHAG “package”—i.e., a high-impact project fit for funding—but this was terrain neither board chair nor ED wished to enter.

“The grants awarded to Hawken School by The Edward E. Ford Foundation have served as important building blocks in the school’s journey to redefine education.”

– SCOTT LOONEY, HEAD OF SCHOOL, HAWKEN SCHOOL



John’s tenure had only recently begun and, with grant size anticipated between \$1M–\$2M, this would be one of the largest single investments in the history of the Foundation. Having the board and their new ED in lock step as they approached this ambitious goal mattered.

The approach that ultimately emerged bore similarities to the ELG process: A Selection Committee would review and winnow submissions (10 pages or less) to a subset of ideas from which full proposals would be sought. These grants—subsequently termed Collaborative Innovation Grants—would require convergence of at least three schools; minimally one of these must meet eligibility criteria for an EEFF grant. One school

would serve as project lead, accepting and holding fiduciary responsibility for the grant. Perhaps most important, school collaboratives were encouraged to present big ideas that were “generalizable, replicable and scalable, with applicability to larger education issues.” All BHAG grants would have a minimum 1:1 match requirement. School presentations of final contenders would occur in April 2017—another similarity to the ELG approach, where school leaders present their ideas directly to the board—and a final decision would be made.

In September 2015—four years after the Prouts Neck retreat and two years into his new role—ED John Gulla reached out to more than 1,500 NAIS school heads via memo, formally introducing himself and announcing the new grant opportunity. Initial inquiries (50–100) translated to 30 preliminary proposals, of which 10 were brought to the full board. Three finalists emerged. Among them, the board was especially excited by the promise of the Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC). Spearheaded by the Hawken School and Scott Looney (who had spoken compellingly to the board several years earlier about the prevailing overemphasis on college admission prep), the board suspected this project offered the greatest potential even as it carried the heaviest risk.



SCOTT LOONEY

Transformation CATALYZED

BEYOND STANDARDIZATION: MASTERY TRANSCRIPT CONSORTIUM

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY, TWO POWERFUL FORCES GAINED A FOOTHOLD WITH AMERICAN EDUCATION: standardization of curriculum and use of letter grades as proxies for perceived student achievement. More than 100 years later, this approach was deeply rooted, not only squelching learning and innovation but perpetuating inequity. Educators and researchers worldwide have been taking stock of what is working—and what is not—in supporting high school students “to focus on meaningful ethical and intellectual engagement.”¹⁷ To break out of the standardization mold, the head of Cleveland’s Hawken School, Scott Looney, worked with colleagues to develop a more immersive, entrepreneurial approach to learning, but they quickly bumped up against existing college transcript requirements. With this exploration, the seeds of today’s Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC) were sown.

After commissioning research to identify alternate templates for a high school transcript that could align with the “apprenticeship model” integral to Hawken’s approach—and finding none—Hawken began forging a new path. At a meeting with 29 schools representing a range of school “types,” 25 quickly committed to testing the new approach. This number grew to 85 within six months. By the time the Collaborative Innovation Grant was considered one year after that inaugural meeting, 100 schools had joined the Mastery Transcript experiment. As of this writing, 380 schools are participating (57% independent, 43% public).

The MTC purpose is to encourage individual schools to rethink traditional methods of curriculum organization and create a mechanism through which the very students who are learning and thriving through these emerging methods can be understood and evaluated—by college admissions officers, parents and even the students themselves. Less than two years after the Edward E. Ford Foundation approved the largest grant in its long history, MTC won the Reimagine Education “Gold” award,¹⁸ which recognizes educational solutions or pedagogy of exceptional approach, uniqueness, innovation, scalability, and efficacy. Use of the Mastery Transcript is still in its infancy, yet more than 300 colleges accepted Mastery Transcript learners over the program’s first two years.

¹⁷ *Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions*, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2016

¹⁸ Reimagine Education is a competition co-organized by QS Quacquarelli Symonds—compilers of the world’s most-consulted university rankings portfolio—and The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. The year MTC won Gold (the highest award), 1,184 applications were received from 39 countries and from across various sectors, including universities, edtech companies, and not-for-profit organizations. Applicants were judged by 160 experts from around the world, including those from Harvard, Google, Amazon, IBM, Microsoft, and the University of Cambridge. Three organizations were recognized in the K–12 category, distinguished as a gold, silver or bronze winner.

Transformation CATALYZED

WHAT BEGAN AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MECHANISM for sharing knowledge and avoiding loss of stellar educational techniques and approaches within the community of a single school may one day be a game-changing force that helps early career teachers “hit the ground running” through gained knowledge from educational peers, even after those peers have left the field. Athena illustrates how collaboration within and beyond a single school’s borders can—with intention and resources—ripple out to positively impact the larger educational ecosystem.

Recognizing that education lacked a repository for passing along the “professional memory” of its strongest practitioners, Deerfield Academy Head of School Margarita Curtis and Assistant Dean of faculty Peter Nilsson teamed up in 2013 to fill this void. Underlying the philosophy of the Athena Project is the idea that “teachers talking with teachers about teaching” is the surest way to transfer knowledge of curriculum design and development in order to support up-and-coming teachers and achieve greater student success.

By promoting collaboration and cross-pollination through an online platform, Athena is turbocharging the ability of teachers to share useful information. In 2015, a \$50,000 Traditional Grant from EEFF supported Deerfield’s deepening of an early platform iteration. A subsequent \$200,000 Educational Leadership Grant three years later enabled Deerfield to expand the teacher community and chart a course toward fiscal sustainability that “baked in” adaptive platform functionality over time.



DEERFIELD ACADEMY | DEERFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
THE ATHENA PROJECT: “WIKIPEDIA MEETS FACEBOOK FOR TEACHERS”

When Margarita Curtis and Peter Nilsson presented the Athena Project to the EE Ford board in 2018, their dialogue with the board surfaced a trace of skepticism from some members about the utility of technology in education, compelling Margarita and Peter to describe Athena’s potential value in new ways, moving beyond “insider” language to articulate the benefits of this technology-based infrastructure innovation. Indeed, as it develops, Athena Project is showing impressive promise for expansive student reach.

“The Edward E. Ford Foundation’s funding model drives schools to think beyond their current programming.”

– PETER NILSSON, KINGS/DEERFIELD



SPECIAL PROJECT: HEAD SEARCH DATABASE

School Leadership: Leveraging Data to Support Strong Leadership Outcomes

A recurring theme running through the Foundation’s ED Observations over many years is the correlation between strong, effective leadership and schools that excel at meeting their missions. It is essential that schools hire and support qualified leaders who are a good fit for the school culture and needs at hand.

Many sectors amass data that informs and advances practice within that industry; however data about independent school leadership and transition is historically absent or exists in proprietary databases owned by consultancies. Despite the importance of school leadership to school success, there has been little to no public information source for schools to tap when facing headship transitions or challenges, since such data has never been gathered in a centralized, searchable way. The new Head Search Database, funded by EE Ford with a special grant in 2020 of \$150,000, aimed to address this absence. A centralized database with head search and tenure information easily accessible to school trustees, heads, search committees, consultants, and headship candidates, could help them become more familiar with the independent school heads landscape and potentially identify consultants well suited to support their leadership transitions.

Project manager Vince Watchorn found a kindred partner in Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) ED Debra Wilson. Debra, along with the SAIS board, readily agreed to house this data tool, which they saw as practical and needed. Perhaps the work Debra had done first at NAIS around school governance, followed by her capacity-building work at SAIS, helped her recognize the vital role that such a database could play in empowering schools to strengthen their ability to orchestrate smooth leadership transitions. Over time, the database will likely become a tool for studying leadership at independent schools.

This undertaking is a good example of the “special projects” that EEFF’s Flexible Agenda now addresses. Special projects are intended as field-serving initiatives that fall outside Traditional or Educational Leadership categories and have potential for broad impact.

The Mastery Transcript Consortium ultimately received a \$2M grant (1:1 match). As expected, this commitment vastly eclipsed any prior gift, beyond grants of \$1M made to Mercersburg in the early 1960s in conjunction with the founder's historic connection to the school, following his death.

This hard-earned result represented the confluence of Bob Hallett's aspirations for building impact, Walter Burgin's years of steady navigation through sometimes choppy BHAG waters, and finally John Gulla's determination to convert concept into action. As they made the historic decision, the board recognized that the CIG marked a new way of doing business to support an independent school landscape that was undeniably changed. The board had tapped new energy and learned firsthand how schools, when incentivized to "think big," responded with creativity and vision.



The Flexible Agenda approach instituted in 2019 quite literally created space to address new needs and opportunities. Within two years of the Beekman retreat, a series of grants totaling \$460,000 had been made for purposes such as coaching and mentoring of school leaders by retired school heads (addressing leadership needs); a school heads database to develop a centralized, accessible information resource; access to expertise through a prototype "resource bank"

of quality professional consultants designed to assist 250 member schools in four states in the mid-Atlantic region; and research delving into multicampus schools that aims to help schools comprehensively plan for their financial futures.

That these special grants were made in the midst of a global pandemic is particularly striking. It is true that many of the needs being addressed through these grants had previously been identified, yet the fact that all parties remained committed to carrying out this work amid the chaos of coronavirus underscores the pressing need. An extraordinary convening via Zoom in April 2021 brought together leaders of these special projects, heads of schools that had received ELGs, EEFF board members, and others to discuss these projects along with emerging trends. More than 70 people participated in this dynamic and frank conversation, which was notable for the uncommon sense of trust and openness it stimulated for a gathering this large—and virtual, no less. Among trending concerns discussed were governance, learning from the pandemic, and curriculum debates; perhaps future grants will be made in some of these areas. In 2022, a special grant was approved for the National Business Officers Association to support research of compensation models, another evergreen topic of discussion between school heads and Foundation board members.

Details of these special grants aside, perhaps most meaningful, in relation to impact, is that the EE Ford Foundation now has a mechanism for more nimbly supporting ongoing dialogue and grantmaking around field developments in a way that accommodates both proactive and responsive approaches.

IMPACT *through* INFRASTRUCTURE

IMPACT THROUGH BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Board eligibility and flow of members on and off the board have been topics of discussion throughout John Gulla's tenure. Historically, the board has preferred an organic approach to board development. There is strong, shared belief that, while "all board members are equal" around the table, the EEFF is fundamentally a family foundation. Just as the board resists arbitrary rules around grantmaking policies, so it resists arbitrary terms for family members. No quota of slots exists for family branches. Instead, the board regularly returns to the topic to evaluate arising needs (i.e., do any board members plan to step down in the foreseeable future?) and opportunities (next generation family members with collegial spirit, interest and commitment to board service). At John Gulla's first board meeting in 2013, the subject arose of long-serving members of the board intentionally cycling off over time. Shortly thereafter, in his quiet but emphatic way, Board Chair Walter Burgin formed a Committee on Trustees (Gill Attfield, Jill Christensen, Bill Menard and John Prentiss) to consider which board member terms were ending, and to propose new prospects. In time, two new members joined the board, one family member and one educator.

In early 2015, Bill Menard's wife, Suzy, joined the board. Suzy had learned a great deal about independent schools through her children's

attendance at such schools and in conversation with her in-laws Judy and Lee through the years, in connection with their EE Ford Foundation work. Further, since Bill and Suzy lived in Washington, DC, for many years, they had regularly engaged in dinner discussions with Walter and Barbara Burgin—also DC residents—about the joys and challenges of independent schools. Suzy was thrilled for the chance to contribute to the work of the Foundation and dig deeper into the world of independent schools.

Educator Liz Duffy, who had recently left her headship of The Lawrenceville School to lead the global education nonprofit International Schools Services, was elected to the board in late 2015. Liz brought a philanthropy background as well, having served both board member and ED roles at philanthropic foundations. When invited to the EEFF board, Liz thought about her gratitude at having received an Educational Leadership grant during her time at Lawrenceville and wanted to give back. ("Plus," said Liz when remembering the invitation, "has anyone ever tried to say no to Walter Burgin?!")

That same year, two longtime members stepped down: John Prentiss, who had served for 15 years, and former ED Phil Havens. Reflecting on nearly 30 years of close association with the Foundation, Phil's gracious letter of resignation observed: "This board has served well the interests of independent schools and given its willingness to challenge itself and will continue to do so." The letter's last line fittingly captured Phil's sense of the Foundation spirit: "Piglet asked Pooh at a parting moment if he and Pooh would be friends forever—Pooh replies, 'Even longer.'" The relationships forged through this foundation

are deep and lifelong—echoing the spirit of founder EE Ford. Even as people transition out of active service, close ties and affection remain.

A board resolution honoring Phil made reference to his many contributions, among them his commitment to the practice of visiting schools and establishing the Foundation's first digital records of grantees (informally referred to by the board as "the bible"). It observed that "his understanding of schools and memory for those he dealt with in his tenure as ED never waned and always contributed an essential dimension to the deliberations of the board," and that "his kindness and thoughtfulness were always in sight and made conversations different than they would have been without his voice."

Walter led his final meeting as chair in November 2016 (though, happily for all, he remained on the board for another five years). A glimpse at board discussion topics and the grants Agenda for this last meeting as chair reveals considerable contrast from his earliest meetings as ED less than 20 years earlier. For example, in 2016, John reported on progress made by NAIS on its DASL (Data Analysis for School Leadership) program, which had recently received \$200,000 in funding. During Walter's first year in 1998–99, the board considered 132 proposals; by 2016, the number of Traditional Grants considered annually was closer to 40, along with five or six educational leadership requests. And another change: The board could now refer to a ten-year Fiscal Year Analysis (prepared by the bank) that provided a longitudinal analysis of the Foundation's portfolio, grantmaking and expenses. It is a tool that Walter had suspected would be useful to the board in contemplating past and future, and one he worked

hard to establish. In short, the ED job Walter Burgin began in 1998 had evolved into a vastly different one now carried out by John Gulla.

When Bob Hallett stepped into the board chair role in April 2017, a new member had joined the ranks of independent school educators at the table: Reveta Bowers. As a dynamic former school head from the Center for Early Education, an independent urban primary school in Los Angeles, Reveta had served with Walter Burgin on the NAIS board and with Bob Hallett on the Independent Educational Services board. While her specific school head experience was with younger students, her broad educational knowledge was extensive; her service on both corporate and foundation boards brought additional insight. And, after 60 years, the Foundation had its first board member of color—another needed perspective. Two years later (2019), family member Nancy Cavanaugh left the board to create space for younger family members, and in 2021, educator Mark Reed became the newest member. Head of school at Charlotte Country Day School for 12 years, Mark had recently been named



REVETA BOWERS

Managing Director of the John M. Belk Endowment, a North Carolina-focused philanthropy deeply rooted in educational purpose. Mark became the board's second Black board member and the first who is actively engaged in the work of philanthropy at their "day job."

Reflecting in June 2021 upon several goals articulated through the 2018 Beekman retreat, Board Chair Bob Hallett observed that many had been met over a three-year period—in the midst of a pandemic. He reminded the board what they had committed to: Being future-facing about independent schools, being mindful about where the Foundation's work needed to be to best support that future with limited resources, and helping schools with "what they don't know they need." It was a moment of reflection all the more poignant since it was Walter Burgin's final board meeting. In paying tribute to Walter's role in the evolution of the EE Ford Foundation through 23 years of service, Bill Menard captured the significance of Walter's tenure as ED, board chair, then at-large board member: "His wisdom, experience and judgment is not just relevant, but also unmatched." Bill's sentiment was vigorously affirmed by his board colleagues.

IMPACT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY & STAFFING

Until recently, the Foundation has lived a largely analog existence, perhaps mirroring the independent school community's historic penchant for a more "handwritten" approach to communication and engagement. A visit to the EEFF office reveals file cabinets that store physical folders for every school that has ever applied to the Foundation, with more information saved for grants than for

denials. This information is regularly referenced by EDs to research an applicant's history with the Foundation when new requests are being contemplated.

When assistant Lucy Kaminsky arrived in 2014, she saw ample room for propelling the Foundation into the future. (Or, as a starting point, into the present: When Lucy arrived, a recently established Google sheet was being used to track grants—a supplement to an older, less robust Access database). After spending two years learning the ropes, John suggested that Lucy encourage a colleague to join the team. Paola Di Tolla took over day-to-day management of grant-related and administrative duties, freeing Lucy to focus on special infrastructure projects such as updating the Foundation website to better reflect the activity of both schools and the Foundation. Other changes have followed.

Procedural infrastructure such as handbooks and tutorials have been created to help smooth inevitable staff transitions. A file digitization project has converted many of EEFF's paper records—board meeting minutes, for example—to electronic format, and now they are more easily accessed. An online folder structure for board materials largely replaced the board mailing three times a year, creating a more staff-efficient, less costly, and less environmentally wasteful system. And more recently, an online, password-protected portal that board members can access via the Foundation website enables board review of meeting materials and other documents.

Finally, the Foundation's database of schools and grants information has been updated to a more flexible, functional platform (AirTable) that allows

for quick and easy analysis of grants and schools data. Building on that improvement, a system is now in place to automate transfer of online application information into the database. (Previously, manual entry was required.) Not only does the new system save staff time, it ensures accuracy.

The dynamic duo of Lucy and Paola moved on to other pursuits, but their work will continue to benefit John, the board and Megan Kub, who assumed the assistant responsibilities in the summer of 2022. In a parallel to the evolution of Walter’s job into John’s, the job Megan now holds is quite different from the one Lucy began. While Megan is responsible for a long list of tasks, the job as it stands today is differently thought-driven than earlier iterations of the role, requiring an ability to not only stay on top of the Foundation’s information and systems, but to continue driving them toward the future.

IMPACT THROUGH POLICY ADJUSTMENT

In 2016, an ad hoc policy committee chaired by David Hubbard took a look at grant policies

between board meetings in order to bring recommended changes to the full board. (Previously, the board had functioned as a “committee of the whole” with respect to policy change.) The slate of recommendations included shifting ELGs from Foundation-initiated to school-initiated (described earlier) and issues of grant size, applicant eligibility and waiting periods. Indeed, as Walter Burgin and others had discovered, tweaking these details allowed the Foundation to better manage available grant resources during portfolio dips and spikes. However, shifts made to address prevailing circumstances must be periodically revisited to determine whether new circumstances demand new “equations” around grant size, eligibility and waiting period. Although this ad hoc policy committee does not meet regularly, the 2016 process established a precedent for the future. Periodic “maintenance checks” associated with grantmaking practices can help ensure a fair and reasonable playing field that maximizes creativity and success for applicants in an ever-shifting landscape.

Nine years, well over 500 school visits (and counting!), thousands of conversations, and more than 60 speaking engagements later, John has helped the Foundation reach toward new philanthropic horizons. Reminiscent of T.S. Eliot’s words, 65 years of striving toward an intention to “improve independent secondary schools,” the EE Ford Foundation is embarking on new journeys to advance that goal.

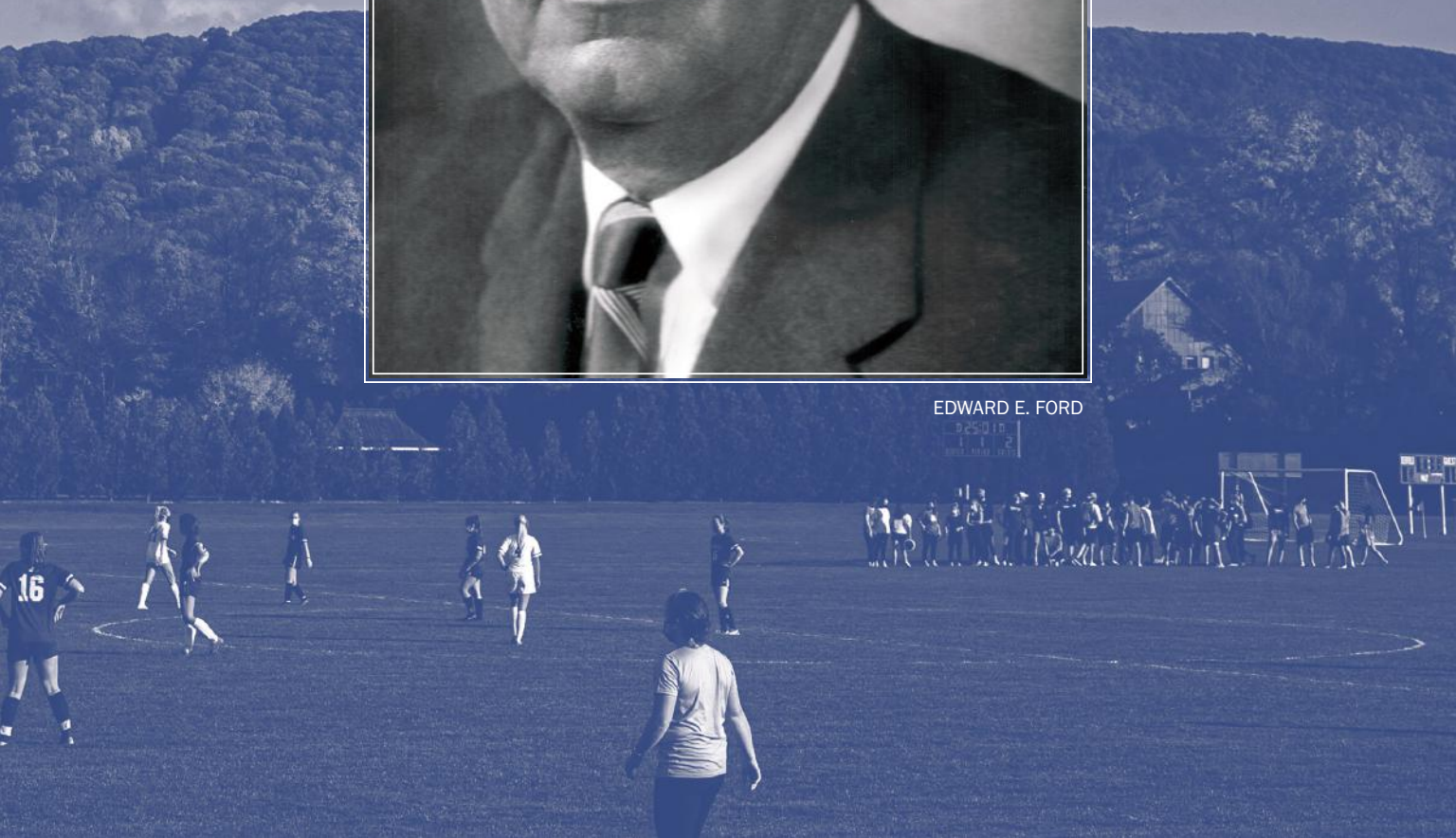
*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*



MEGAN KUB



EDWARD E. FORD





MOVING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Exploring the EE Ford Foundation's history has revealed a series of recurring themes, some technical, others philosophical. Overarching all of these is the core theme of impact. From there most others flow, such as:

- **Grant amounts.** How does grant size relate to impact?
- **Initiating for impact.** Who determines what schools need? Is the Foundation more of a “responder” or an “instigator”?
- **Reach.** How best to affect change beyond a single school—or grantee's—boundaries?
- **Schools and Associations.** Which produces greatest impact? Is it “either/or” or “both/and”?
- **Eligibility.** Can schools with certain attributes use the Foundation's resources particularly effectively?
- **Stewardship.** What is the best level (and form) of stewardship in relation to impact?
- **Institutional Longevity.** Should the Foundation exist in perpetuity or spend down through a strategy of unprecedented impact requiring a larger infusion of resources than long-term existence allows?
- **Role of Family.** What composition of family and educator members can ensure that maximum impact is being derived from Foundation dollars?

As the board looks ahead, there will be opportunities to consider each of these facets through the lens of its own board culture and philanthropic

“We sit on the board as futurists. It's our job to think about what the organization should look like 20 years from now. To look at the past to inform the present but drive the future.”

– REVETA BOWERS, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



“As a new board member, I am struck by the level of honesty that exists across this board. That’s not always the case, and I have vast appreciation for this approach.”

– MARK REED, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



practice, and through sustained and expanding relationships with members of the independent school community.

BOARD PROCESSES, PIPELINE AND CULTURE

Throughout its 65 years, the Foundation’s process for introducing new board members has been organic and somewhat relaxed. The board chair periodically asks board members to think about candidates who may fit the bill in the near or longer term; sometimes these prospects are invited relatively quickly, other times a bit later, when the time and circumstances feel right. A legacy of long service

has been the standard; term limits have never been in place or, until recently, even considered. As Walter Burgin observed, “The nature of board meetings change as the personalities change.” Board flow as it currently stands has fostered a culture rooted in trust and respect for all, regardless of the specific path that led any one member to this board. There is open dialogue, a board-wide appreciation of collective wisdom, and a spirit of “agreeing to disagree” during grant Agenda discussions. Members may be quite passionate on pro and con sides of a particular request under consideration; however, the climate never becomes divisive. Everyone listens, respects their colleagues, votes, and moves on. When it comes to “directional” decisions surrounding strategy and policy, the board prefers to take time—sometimes years—to move toward goals, learning more and building consensus along the way.

Since 2010, the board has steadily increased the number of former school head members, infusing more “fresh knowledge” into the mix. As the board considers its future, it is contemplating whether these educator members should serve extended board terms in the way of family members or be handled differently. To help address this question, educator Liz Duffy



BILL AND SUZY MENARD

“I think the various predecessors—Bill’s parents, Jill’s father, and even EE Ford himself—would be happy that we family members are on the board continuing to advance this work.”

– SUZY MENARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



has joined the Trustee Committee—the first educator to do so. Two classes of board membership may ultimately result, one applying to family members, the other to educators.

Another process to be addressed is the manner in which family members arrive at board service. With three family branches represented (EE Ford and his sisters Elizabeth and Harriet), the length of time that has passed since involvement of the first generations, and an ever-expanding pool of candidates (as children have children), how will the board balance EE Ford’s own family branch with those of his sisters? Current board members understand the time and thought commitment board service entails; at a minimum, new candidates must be willing to take that on. What other criteria should be in place around skill or knowledge sets? And what should newer members anticipate about the duration of their service? With Bill Menard taking the lead, work is un-

derway to craft a process that retains the spirit of the past approach while carrying the board toward the future. How best to extend the EE Ford legacy and ensure that family members across different branches can continue to enjoy the somewhat unusual and—as family board members have testified—satisfying relationship and dialogue with more distant relatives through shared philanthropic service?

FLEXIBLE AGENDA AND SPECIAL GRANTS

The addition of the flexible agenda has been game changing for the Foundation in its ability to more quickly respond to field trends and needs through an alternate grantmaking mechanism. As the ELG network expands, a group of leaders gets to know one another and build trust in expanding forums, leading to kernels of ideas that burst into pilot projects undertaken by naturally occurring collaborations.

“Foundation service was seen not as a family obligation, but a family opportunity.”

– BILL MENARD, EE FORD BOARD MEMBER



Transformation CATALYZED

ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL (SAES) HAS, AS OF THIS WRITING, THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE ONLY EE FORD GRANTEE THAT HAS RECEIVED TWO \$250,000 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS and is surely one of the best examples to date of the transformational effect of EE Ford grants on both an individual school and the field beyond. Both grants supported “science of learning” work that lies at the core of this school’s educational approach, which intertwines with the school’s mission “to know and inspire each student in an inclusive community dedicated to exceptional teaching, learning and service.”

The first ELG in 2015 supported scaling of the school’s nascent Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning to serve a broader audience. Then four years old, the Center had served roughly 150 faculty and administrators from more than 35 independent schools. As word of its program offerings spread, the Center found itself turning away many teachers who wished to enroll; an Educational Leadership Grant helped them expand the Center and accommodate increasing demand.

Over the next few years, the school had built organizational strength and its Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning had gained steam through a \$650,000 investment from SAES alumnus (and eBay founder) Pierre Omidyar and \$1M from the Chan Zuckerberg Institute. The well-managed school had increased enrollment and Annual Fund giving and made smart new capital investments in its



ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL | POTOMAC, MARYLAND

THREADING MIND, BRAIN AND EDUCATION SCIENCE THROUGH LEARNING

physical plant. By now, more than 550 teachers and administrators from more than 60 schools in 26 states and 9 countries had participated in the Center's flagship Science of Teaching and School Leadership Summer Academy.

Omidyar and Zuckerberg funding had enabled SAES to launch Neuroteach Global for Teachers, an online mind, brain, education micro-learning experience for teachers and school leaders. This program offered an interactive curriculum that covered much of the content available through the Center's Summer Academy. Demonstrated success with this program led SAES to approach EE Ford with a second ELG request in 2019 for a student-focused version of Neuroteach Global. As with the teachers' version, Neuroteach Global for Students would open access to this curriculum to a larger, further-flung group of students nationally and internationally. The goal was to develop micro-courses in English and Spanish with teams of students, teachers and researchers actively engaged in program design.

This decade-long journey points to a school that has done an excellent job leveraging EE Ford grants to deepen its ability to serve not only its own students and faculty, but those well beyond, all while strengthening itself institutionally.



“Schools have constituencies of students, faculty, parents, alumni and boards; associations have memberships. At EE Ford, we have a different perch that allows us to be courageous as long as we believe we’re supporting our mission of serving independent schools. We have considerable power as a convener.”

– JOHN GULLA, EE FORD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



That said, the process for identifying and advancing these special grants relies on the ED’s knowledge, networks, and energy in planting and helping to germinate seeds of possibility around emerging ideas. This can work well when an idea takes hold and bears fruit in the form of a viable project. When it turns out that the ground wasn’t sufficiently fertile for that special grant, considerable resources of time and energy have been spent with little tangible or immediate result.

Keeping the engine of special projects humming along while also advancing the conversations, paperwork, school visits, and ED observations required to entertain and process Traditional Grants, ELGs, and a future CIG—all while working to advance EE Ford’s visibility in the field, keeping the applicant pool vibrant—

may be unsustainable within a single staff role, even for someone as passionate and effective as John Gulla. Assuming the board wishes to continue exploring special grants amidst its existing programs, it will likely need to add capacity to do so, even if that support comes in the form of a field-knowledgeable consultant that partners closely with the ED.

In addition to the imperative of addressing trends, the vital “thought space” afforded through periodic flexible agendas can continue to inform next philanthropic steps. And the clear productivity of the Prouts Neck and Beekman retreats suggests the value, from time to time, of bringing together the board for deeper conversations to “fast forward” lingering strategy and governance questions, including not just what the Foundation does, but how it does it.

“The money is nothing to sneeze at but the endorsement meant a lot to the board.”

– SCOTT LOONEY, HEAD OF SCHOOL, HAWKEN SCHOOL



“Particularly with schools, particularly in education right now after 30 months of the pandemic, schools want that ability to lay it out there and they want to hear honest dialogue around things—that’s how you create connection.”

– DEBRA WILSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



In other words, not just people and projects, but also process.

LEVERAGING “PERCH” AND PARTNERS

As a private foundation accountable to its mission and to operating within the law, EE Ford is free of certain restrictions that can inhibit its partners—whether schools or associations—from taking risks or getting too far ahead of the curve. Some would even say that the added value of philanthropic dollars is the opportunity to experiment, to take informed risks, and even to occasionally fail in the interest of creating bigger, bolder change. How



DEBRA WILSON

the Foundation chooses to use its capital—of reputation, visibility, convening power and, of course, dollars—to address emerging needs is a matter of both will and thoughtful discussion. Should its role within the field remain largely the same, or should it somehow shift in order to effect more transformational impact? Such questions are likely to enter future flexible agenda or retreat discussions.

Another line of thought related to expanding its base of partners is the board’s expressed desire to engage with the full range of independent schools, an aspiration that bumps up against the realities of large school infrastructures. The willingness, and perhaps even ability, in some cases, of these schools to comply with the Foundation’s process—particularly its mandate that proposal contacts are school heads—likely limits engagement of this swath of larger schools. And yet, leaders of at least some of these schools may recognize and covet the value in EEFF’s “stamp of approval,” which is regularly referenced by grantees as a nonmonetary benefit of Foundation engagement that carries weight and meaning both internally and externally.

If EE Ford hopes to attract and engage a more complete spectrum of schools as partners for future work, the board may wish to consider how to accomplish this goal while honoring the spirit of existing practice, and not shying away from what it has learned through the years about the importance of buy-in and sustained commitment by school leaders, but perhaps interpreting that in new ways for new situations (and schools).

STEWARDSHIP

An important element of impact is stewardship. Did grant funds get spent in the manner proposed? Were goals achieved? These questions were relevant in Bill Fowle's day and remain so today. Grantee reports suggest that, while not all grants attain goals as set forth, many schools exceed initial expectations and projections. A formal stewardship project in recent years aimed to tie up loose ends from past grants. Foundation staff deeply researched its files to understand how its stewardship system was working and whether its process for closing the loop on grant reporting could be improved. Going back

nearly a decade, staff identified 184 schools with "open" files and took time to inquire about fulfillment of the stewardship obligation. In time, 75% of these had completed and reported on funded projects; another 20% provided reasonable plans for project completion and report submission. (Staff turnover at schools was cited as the most common cause for delayed completion and reporting.) The ultimate enforcement is that any school with outstanding stewardship reporting is not eligible to reapply until that requirement has been satisfied.

Going forward, the board may want to modify its processes for stewardship. There is no doubt report management is more efficient with sustained, timely follow-up; doing so would likely require additional staff time. If the Foundation chooses not to invest in this step toward "impact accountability," it may be missing an opportunity to learn and grow in its central goal of yielding highest and best impact through its grantmaking. Determining which data will prove most useful in pursuing this goal, then developing a system to ensure that outcomes data is regularly gathered and assessed, may move EEFF ever closer to its high impact goal.

VIEWS FROM THE FIELD

This history project presented an opportunity to hear directly from school heads and others who have worked with the EEFF over the years about their experience. Some of their observations have been woven through the preceding narrative; however, each of these interviews yielded interesting reflections on ways that EE Ford's work might be directed toward increased impact in the future. Some of what we heard follows.



PETER NILSSON

“I appreciate the willingness of EE Ford to take the journey together in search of answers to some of the biggest challenges we face.”

- DONNA OREM, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



DONNA OREM

Schools need greater connectivity and community across them. Peter Nilsson, head of Kings Academy (and formerly at Deerfield where, as Director of Research, Innovation, and Outreach, he spearheaded the Athena Project) believes that, as we head into the future, schools need greater connectivity and community across them. Schools have historically been siloed from one another and, though this may have worked in the past, it is no longer a winning approach. The model for school leaders, teachers and the broader culture has grown, and the need for enhanced connectivity has grown along with it. Might the EEFF play a role in establishing that community? If so, what would that look like, and

what would it mean for the Foundation’s grant-making? The degree of sophistication in secondary schools may make them better suited than primary education for scaling solutions, because secondary school opens up a broader range of pedagogical, disciplinary and organizational opportunities that are intriguing.

Knowledge sharing. Pat Bassett, former head of NAIS, describes the “currency” of EEFF’s credibility, and the opportunity to use that currency for further good. School heads are aware of the Foundation’s contributions to the ambitions of schools, so EEFF has their attention. He thinks case studies shedding light on ways that schools have dealt with the “bad stuff” could be quite powerful. Perhaps finalists for the larger grants could share a case study of such a situation and describe how they managed it.

Change is as inevitable as it is necessary. Debra Wilson, leader of Southern Association of Independent Schools, sees external forces helping drive change with larger organizations that may not have the capital or see the need. A foundation like EE Ford can play an important role in prompting and supporting that change. As one familiar with horses, Debra uses the analogy of leaning against a horse, which becomes

a gentle way of nudging them into movement. She sees a role for the Foundation in “leaning” toward the layer of leadership immediately below school heads—an important training ground for the next set of school leaders—and also anticipates that the question of human capital even more broadly (faculty) will be pressing. Debra values the Foundation’s knowledge of the field and ability to assemble the right people for projects like the school heads database, and then step aside to let the work unfold. “Maybe the Foundation has a role to play in facilitating tough conversations,” she suggests. “As an industry, we could use a place that helps facilitate these in a sophisticated way; I could see EE Ford playing an interesting role in bringing these conversations forward.” She points out that it is less about an agenda, or a single “right” solution than it is an illumination, and a space for honest, respectful conversation, even as people disagree.

“Angie’s List” for independent schools. Scott Looney, of Hawken School and Mastery Transcript Consortium, was a successful student in school growing up—and hated every minute of it. Landing in education was a bit of an accident, and in the independent school community, a further accident. He is determined, through his work, to put a dent in the current model of education, which he describes as an “industrial production model” with little evidence that it works. What he loves about a “mastery” approach to education is that it harkens to the oldest form of learning in the world (apprenticeship) and creates a differentiated experience. Students are measured through output, creating a meaningful intersection of assessment and

mastery. He sees the Foundation’s more recent grantmaking “instruments”—the CIG and flexible agenda—as vehicles for industry-wide impact. He describes an “Angie’s List” for independent schools, a place where school heads and others could search for services—especially in crisis management situations when a school may be unsure where to start. Scott hopes the EEFF will use its convening and funding power to find the common challenges faced by schools and fund the projects that will help the largest number of schools address them. That said, he recognizes that the individual school grants are an important part of the Foundation’s history and remain important for smaller schools in particular.

Blue sky conversations. Darryl J. Ford, head of William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, who has successfully raised capital funds to benefit all aspects of Penn Charter, has pondered this question with his board members: “What is our ability to support the industry of education?” When it comes to sharing across schools, he acknowledges that schools are often so busy taking care of their own business, it can be hard to reach across, yet it is vital to get people to think not “what we have” but “what we can have,” and not “what we are” but “what we can become.” He suggests that, if schools can get back to being deeply thoughtful (the pandemic significantly disrupted this), EE Ford might be able to create space and time for “blue sky” conversations. Darryl imagines conversations at different levels: “the biggest, bluest sky; the medium sky; and the modest sky.” Another approach is to consider eliciting ideas from people at three different stages of their careers: someone about to step away from headship, a mid-career person,

and someone in the early stages. Even in schools with resources, EEFF support has taken schools beyond their usual boundaries and, with its more recent activity, the Foundation has practiced going outside its own boundaries. Perhaps this history project can help EE Ford find new ways to further not just the blue-sky thinking at schools, but the blue-sky thinking of its own work.

Driving thinking; taking risks. As head of an independent school membership association, Donna Orem (NAIS) has long appreciated the way that EE Ford works with organizations like hers to explore problems and solutions. She sees the future as one of collaboration, of understanding that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and then “doing” in ways that prioritize that whole. Going it together can be hard for schools, uncomfortable for myriad reasons. The Foundation can help drive thinking around addressing and advancing work on existing challenges, modeling collaboration as it does. The unknown comes with risk. Not all new experiments will succeed, and some may need several tries, but lessons learned along the way can create a trail toward change. Donna appreciates how the

Foundation has dared to put funds toward projects where a productive outcome was not a sure bet—and thinks the future is likely to hold more of that, not less.

These examples and opportunities, suggested by just a handful of independent school practitioners, offer a sneak peek into the dynamism and creativity simmering below the surface. That creativity, together with the Foundation’s reputation, convening clout and resources, can be powerful tools toward transformation. Having deepened and reinforced its organizational structures, policies, discussion and practices, the Foundation is looking toward a bright and interesting philanthropic future.

To close with the words of Walter Burgin: *“As someone who’s about to leave the room, I’ve been listening. I’ve heard a lot of things that need to be remembered and make me feel good about the future of the foundation; that it’s in good hands. We’re needed. Independent schools are needed. And if you read the mission statements of independent schools, and they do what they say, we’re in good hands.”*

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

\$125,000,000+

TOTAL AMOUNT GRANTED

2,600+

TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED

\$230,000,000+

TOTAL RAISED FOR SCHOOLS THROUGH MATCHING GRANTS

\$2,000,000

LARGEST SINGLE GRANT:
HAWKEN SCHOOL (2017)
FOR MASTER TRANSCRIPT CONSORTIUM,
A COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION GRANT

\$6,700

SMALLEST PROGRAM GRANT TOTAL
FOR A SINGLE SCHOOL:
WEST PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY
FREE SCHOOL (1971)

\$805,000

LARGEST PROGRAM GRANT TOTAL
FOR A SINGLE SCHOOL:
HATHAWAY BROWN,
10 GRANTS (1981-2019)

\$4,395,500

TOTAL AMOUNT GRANTED TO MERCERSBURG
ACADEMY: 23 GRANTS (1958-2009);
INCLUDES 8 MATCHING GRANTS AND
SEVERAL TRIBUTE GRANTS

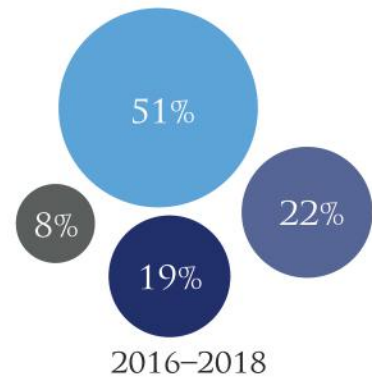
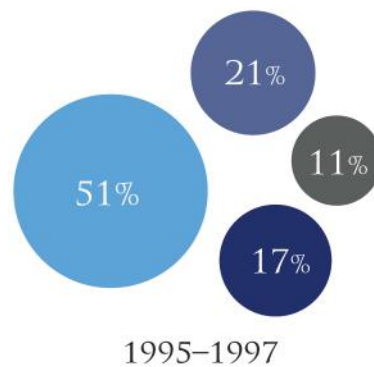
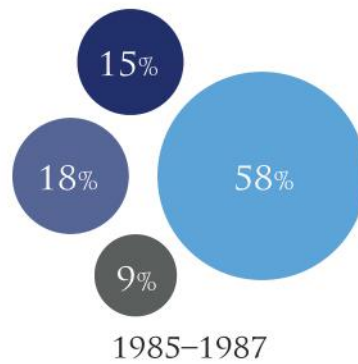
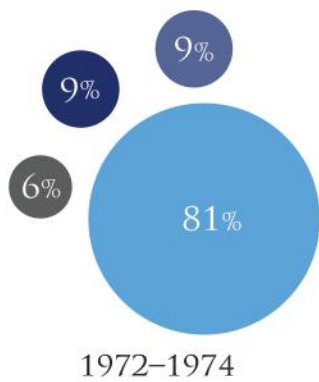
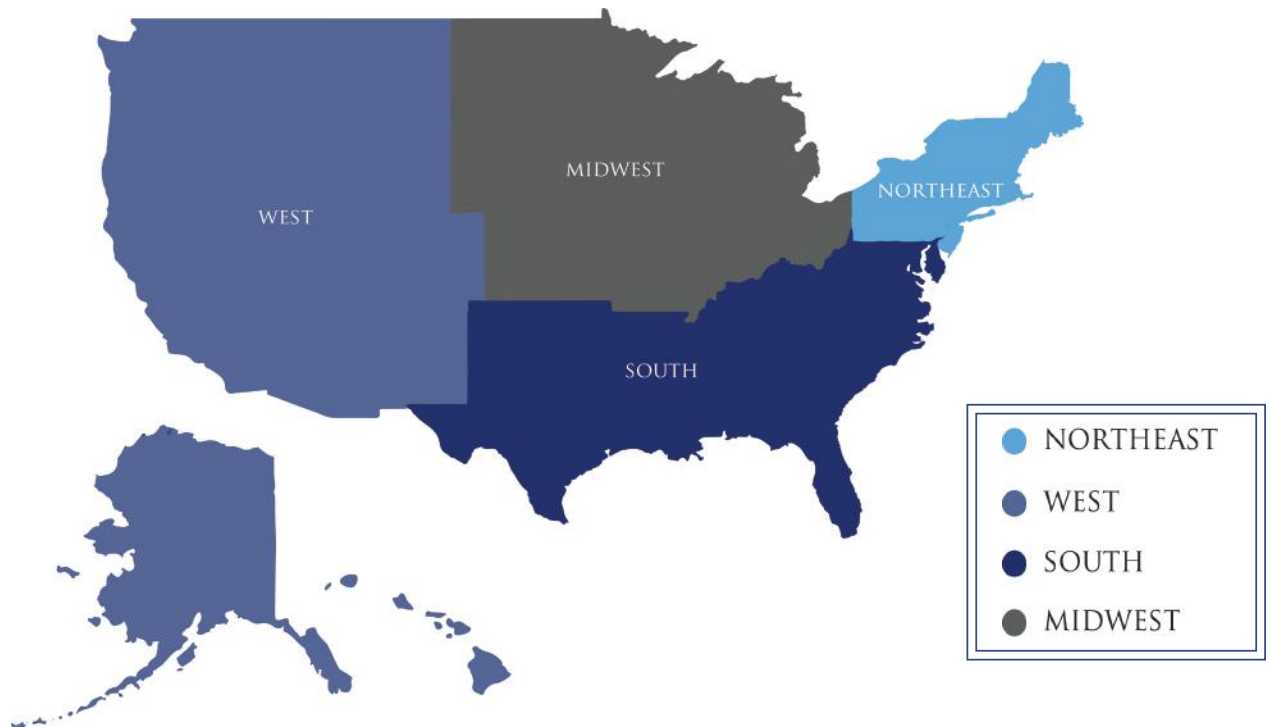
\$16,250,000+

TOTAL GRANTED THROUGH 59 EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP GRANTS (2008-2022)

\$1,000

SMALLEST SINGLE GRANT:
JOHN BURROUGHS SCHOOL
(1958)

REGIONAL GRANTMAKING OVER TIME



THANK YOU TO OUR COLLABORATORS

Gillian Attfield	Board member (former)
Pat Bassett*	Executive Director, National Association of Independent Schools (former)
Reveta Bowers*	Board member
Christopher Brooks	Board member
Walter Burgin*	Executive Director, board chair and at-large board member (all former)
Nancy Cavanaugh	Board member (former)
Gillian Christensen	Board member
Paola Di Tolla	Executive Assistant (former)
Elizabeth Duffy*	Board member
Darryl Ford	Head of School, William Penn Charter School
John Gulla*	Executive Director
Robert Hallett*	Board chair and Executive Director (former)
David Hubbard	Board member
Lucy Kaminsky	Executive Assistant (former)
Megan Kub	Executive Assistant
James Largey	Managing Director and Senior Trust Officer, JP Morgan Private Bank
Scott Looney	Head of School, Hawken School
Suzy Menard	Board member
William Menard	Board vice chair
Ford Menard	Board member
Peter Nilsson	Head of School, The Kings Academy
Donna Orem	Executive Director, National Association of Independent Schools
John Prentiss	Board member (former)
Mark Reed*	Board member
Doug Smith	Archivist, Mercersburg Academy
Phillips Smith*	Board chair and member-at-large (all former)
Tyler Tingley*	Board member
Debra Wilson	Executive Director, Southern Association of Independent Schools; President-elect, NAIS

* Indicates former Head of School

PHOTO CREDITS

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