

OCTOBER 2023

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The news you have been waiting for is here! The NAEF National Conference will take place on **Wednesday, April 10 - Friday April 12, 2024** at the beautiful **Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay!**

Registration will open October 18, 2023. We'll provide you with email updates as details develop, so keep an eye on your inbox! Additionally, we'll be sharing updates on our social media channels, so be sure to follow us to stay in the loop!



EVENTS

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Despite Progress, Women Superintendents Face Steep Path to Gender Parity

Reprinted from [Education Week](#)

The portion of female superintendents leading the nation's largest school districts has increased slightly in recent years, but men still lead the lions' share, and women often face hurdles in taking on the role, new data show.

That men still lead about 70 percent of the nation's 500 largest districts is particularly striking in a field where [77 percent of teachers are women](#), said Julia Rafal-Baer, the CEO of ILO Group, an education consulting firm that promotes women in leadership.

"As you look at the trend data, we are starting to see an uptick," she said. "But overall, we continue to have a major crisis in our country. We believe this needs to be focused on with real intentionality."

[Lacking federal data on the demographics of district leaders](#), ILO Group collected data about the superintendents of the 500 largest school systems dating back to 2018. In July 2023, women led 152 of those districts, compared to 139 in 2018. The data suggest those large systems are slightly more female-led [than districts nationally](#).

About 21 percent of those districts experienced a leadership turnover in the 2022-23 school year, in keeping with [higher rates of superintendent departures](#) during previous years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the analysis found.

The data also suggest that women often become superintendents after stepping up during tumultuous periods in their districts.

Of the women superintendents included in the data, 53 percent were internal candidates who were already working in the district before being selected for the job. And seven of 10 of those internal candidates were appointed on an interim basis before taking the position more permanently, the data showed.

In districts led by external candidates, 27 percent have women superintendents, compared to 34 percent of districts led by internal candidates, ILO Group found.

The number of female candidates first hired on an interim basis suggests that women superintendents often face a "glass cliff," taking the helm of school systems in times of crisis or following sudden departures of former leaders, making it more difficult to demonstrate their value to school board members, said Emily Hartnett, the senior managing director at ILO Group who helped compile the data.

"Women are more often required to prove that they can succeed in the position before they are hired more permanently for it," she said. "That really speaks to the gender imbalance."

How to Secure Auction Sponsorships: 3 Actionable Steps

By: [Roger Devine](#)



Roger Devine is an educator and one of the founders of Northworld, the developer of SchoolAuction.net - online software designed to help schools and non-profits organizations plan, manage, and run fundraising auctions. He has chaired many many auctions, and thinks about how they work best more than is probably healthy.

If there is one aspect that can take any fundraising [auction](#) (whether online or in-person) to the next level, it's sponsorship support. Sponsors can elevate your auction item list, venue, entertainment, and catering to help you provide an unforgettable experience for your auction guests.

However, securing local auction sponsorships can be a daunting task for planning committees. Questions like "Who should we contact first?" and "How do we approach prospects?" might weigh heavily on your mind.

To answer these questions, we'll arm you with three quick steps your team can take to effectively secure and engage sponsors. Let's dive in!

Identify target sponsors

Research optimal business partners, community partners, or other individuals within your existing network. Here's a checklist to identify potential sponsors:

- **They have a history of philanthropic giving.** Identify the sponsors you know would be the most willing to participate. For example, perhaps a local gym has a history of giving free or discounted workout classes.
- **Their services align with your auction needs.** Review your audience preferences and fundraising goals to ensure you're scouting for sponsors that directly fulfill a need, such as providing an item that aligns with your audience's interests.
- **They have a connection to your district or school.** Friends, family members, alumni, and other community members with a connection to your community are great options as they already have a familiarity with your mission.

Align your team by reviewing sponsors that fall into these categories and be sure all of your needs are accounted for—venue, [auction items](#), financial support, or services such

as entertainment. By clarifying your objectives from the get-go, you will narrow your search and maximize your outreach efforts.

Prepare for outreach

Prepare both your resources and your committee. This means you'll want to have a well-drafted sponsorship proposal on hand to reference in sponsorship conversations and to send in email communications. Your proposal should include:

- **A quick introduction** complete with an overview of your foundation, the auction's purpose, and why sponsorship is essential.
- **An overview of why you're raising money** (e.g. to purchase new classroom technology or athletic equipment; or upgrade afterschool programs, etc.).
- **How a sponsor's support will help** you raise funds, enhance your event day, or expand your marketing reach.
- **What the sponsor will get** out of supporting your school whether that be recognition during the event or special placement within your auction website.
- **Contact information and next steps** for how to get involved.

Divide your prospective sponsors across your committee and establish a communication workflow. Then, develop a process for internal logistics tracking. This will ensure you're not making duplicate requests. You can use dedicated auction software to streamline your tracking and keep everyone on the same page.

Reach out and follow up

Reach out to each identified sponsor and keep tabs on who has responded to your inquiries. Not everyone will have the same preferred communication methods, so put follow-up strategies into place. For example, a business that has not responded to emails or phone calls might be best to approach in person first.

Be flexible with sponsor expectations as well. You can do this by creating pre-determined sponsorship levels that enable a sponsor to select a level of support they feel most comfortable providing. For example, a top-tier sponsor might provide more financial support and receive more prominent recognition as a result.

[Auction software](#) features can help you perfect your sponsorship packages. As an example, here's how a district or school could structure available packages:

- **A bronze sponsor's** logo or name will appear in event programs, they will be acknowledged during the auction and will receive two complimentary tickets.
- **A silver sponsor** will be rewarded with all the benefits of a bronze sponsor in addition to receiving a reserved seat and an opportunity to provide promotional material or branded items at the auction.
- **A gold sponsor** will be rewarded with all the benefits of a silver sponsor in addition to receiving a dedicated booth or display at the auction and additional tickets.

With a framework like this in place, your most generous sponsors will be appropriately recognized and can choose a level of support that best suits them. This will pave the way for a positive future relationship as sponsors will remember your thoughtful recognition.

These steps outline the basics for a successful sponsor outreach strategy. Remember to give your team plenty of time to research, reach out, and follow up to make the most of your efforts. You've got this!

What Do You Mean Brave Spaces? I Want Safety!

By: [Deanna Rolffs](#)



Deanna Rolffs (they/she) is a strategist, facilitator, coach, systems thinker, and consultant that has worked with executive leaders and teams for more than twenty years, the last ten focused on the intersection of organizational theory, leadership development, justice, and equity. Their process consulting approach focuses on organizational transformation via thriving teams, brave leadership, equitable systems, and inclusive communities. They illuminate underlying issues with you, and guide teams to learn individually and collectively about our power, privilege, and intersectional identities to create a transformational path forward. They are always up for dreaming and acting to make systemic outcomes more equitable. Deanna served as a Senior Consultant with Design Group International since 2018, became a Senior Design Partner in 2021, and launched L3 Catalyst Group in 2023.

When was the last time you felt unsafe? Expectations of safety are not afforded equally in the United States, impacting our lives from classrooms and school boards to well-intentioned philanthropic efforts.

When we grow spaces of bravery, students benefit. Educators ability to facilitate brave spaces accelerates student learning. Growing brave spaces, where discomfort is shared and expected, we begin to disrupt the fact that systems are doing what they were designed to do: perpetuate the current power structure. Arao and Clemens provide an alternate way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice in a chapter titled "From Safe to Brave Spaces," found in *The Art of Effective Facilitation* by Lisa M. Landreman.

A "brave space" is the "creation of a challenging environment that encourages equal participation across representative identities." Bravery is necessary, instead of safety, because "learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favor of a new way of seeing things." ([Boostrom, 1998](#))

Leadership and philanthropy require increased ability to bravely unlearn and relearn.

Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens share the following elements found in a brave space when engaging in social justice commitments. ([Ali, 2017](#)) Brave spaces exhibit the following common rules:

1. Agree to disagree: where varying opinions are accepted
2. Don't take things personally: Owning intentions and impacts - in which learners acknowledge and discuss instances where a dialogue has affected the emotional well-being of another person
3. Challenge by choice: where learners have an option to step in and out of challenging conversations
4. Respect: where learners show respect for one another's basic personhood
5. No attacks: where learners agree not to intentionally inflict harm on one another

The team at Grand Valley State University's [Inclusion & Equity Institute](#) summarized Arao and Clemens' work to help us see what brave spaces can mean for those of us with privileged or marginalized identities:

For those with [power](#) ("ability to achieve purpose and affect change" Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)

- Learning may involve the giving up of a former condition for a new way of doing things.
- It may involve stepping out and engaging in a conversation even when there is fear of getting it wrong.
- It can also mean accepting feedback about being told about an insensitivity, an uninformed perspective, or a micro-aggression.
- For those who hold [marginalized identities](#) ("treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral"):
- Recognition that sitting during these discussions about inequity may mean feeling vulnerable, exposed, frustrated, angry. There is no choice to only be safe.
- Recognition of the added weight that people may feel as we illuminate the work we have yet to do.
- Elevating the voices of those that live in a place of marginalization is critical - their "knowing" is paramount.

An executive at national philanthropic organization recently shared the following: "I'm devastated to think our staff don't all experience belonging. How did I miss this? What do we do about it?" Brave spaces are just one way to start.

Learning-oriented leaders employ these practices as they grow brave spaces:

Focus on learning more than knowing. A leader in a team I was facilitating asked recently if he needed to attend a part of the training that he had been exposed to already. This is a privilege: to think we "get it" or "understand it" or "have arrived." Surround yourself with people that encourage your learning more than your knowing.

Acknowledge your power and privilege. Sit with it, notice it, use it, spend it to make space for others without savior mentality. Don't look away.

Listen to those in your life with marginalized identities, without pushback. Honor the components of brave spaces that apply to you, based on your own mix of identities, which

we all have. All people with marginalized identities don't consider themselves marginalized. People with similar identities may experience the world very differently.

Keep learning about how you react to discomfort. Don't give up on yourself by sinking back into your comfort. The more I am in brave spaces, the more I need them because people exhibit honesty, integrity, and truth...and they get a lot of brave work done. Notice the people in your life that sit with you in discomfort; nurture those relationships.

Students benefit when adults create brave spaces. How can you facilitate brave spaces in your life?

Mental Health Matters Fund fuels proactive support for K-12 student well-being at State College Area School District

By [Mary Kay Montovino](#)



Mary Kay (Archer) Montovino (State High '73) has had many roles within the school district—student, alumna, parent, staff member, and volunteer—and is currently President of the SCASD Education Foundation.

Mary Kay also worked for SCASD as a secretary in the main office of the high school, at Radio Park and Mount Nittany Middle School, and in other offices around the district and served as the first President of the State College Educational Support Personnel Association (SCESPA).

A board member since 2017, Mary Kay has served the Education Foundation as secretary, vice president, and now as president. In addition to her work with the Education Foundation, Mary Kay is a reunion chair for the class of 1973, which recently celebrated its 50th.

Advancing our mission to make a direct impact on students has relied heavily on close collaboration with administrators and educators who work on the frontlines in our schools. One of the best examples of this partnership between donors and volunteers and our school district is the creation of the SCASD Education Foundation's Mental Health Matters Fund.

Children and teen mental health disorders surged across the country during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. A proactive approach to student mental health prior to 2020 laid a foundation that proved to be essential over the past three years.

In 2019, SCASD administrators shared compelling data with the Education Foundation, illustrating how efforts already implemented by the district were improving student well-being and outlining what more could be done to make an even bigger impact. As a result,

the Education Foundation pioneered the Mental Health Matters Fund with an initial \$50,000 investment using proceeds from its Maroon & Gray Society Celebration.

Following the pandemic, demand for student mental health services, programming and support skyrocketed as the issue became a national crisis. With the fund already in place, the district was able to quickly expand its efforts and seek additional support for anticipated needs. The Mental Health Matters Fund has thrived, continuing to evolve and fuel an innovative support system for students and families by funding mental health and well-being initiatives that include:

- Direct care for students who cannot access mental health professionals through their health insurance or when families lack resources to access care
- Professional development for faculty and staff focused on trauma-informed care and building classroom community
- Curriculum that incorporates mental health into everyday learning
- Mental health kits for students and support for activities of the student-run Mental Health Matters Club
- Collaboration with community organizations like the Jana Marie Foundation to introduce new programs and resources to students

With support from the Mental Health Matters Fund, the district also established a relationship with Penn State's Herr Clinic to meet a growing demand for direct, one-on-one mental health support for students. The mission of this partnership is to remove barriers and provide equitable access to students, families, faculty, and staff seeking mental health support. Contributions to the Education Foundation help to cover the \$45,000 infrastructure that supports 800+ hours of mental health support for students provided by eight Masters-level mental health interns and one supervising graduate assistant.

The collaborative effort to address student mental health support has helped the district make great strides. The Mental Health Matters Fund is a permanent fund that makes a direct and life-changing difference for students.

SCASD Director of Student Services Jeanne Knouse was instrumental in working with the Education Foundation on establishing the fund. She said its impact is both simple, yet profound: "If students' basic needs and mental health needs aren't met, they can't learn. With this support, we remove those barriers to learning."



Six Steps to Build AI Accountability

Reprinted from [Getting Smart Blog](#)

Accountability with AI is critical, especially in schools and especially right now. Many educators are skeptical of AI in general and in particular, generative AI (GenAI). They may even see firsthand the biases and inaccuracies inherent in chatbots and content creation tools. However, the push to use the tools in schools is real – and alarming. No matter how pressed for money schools may be, GenAI is not a substitute for any level of human contact. The idea that the tools will evolve and improve is not a valid argument because they do not always improve, and we do not know how they will change.

Why, then, pay attention to Generative AI at all? Because, in the right context and with the right guardrails, it may bring productivity gains for teachers, and some level of personalized learning for students. It will give young learners new tools with which to express themselves and connect constructively. It will also be misused: in bullying, false identification, plagiarism, and many other ways. These tools reflect and amplify all the positive and negative qualities of the people who use them. Finally, they are going to be part of every student's environment, and using them in schools will provide a safer way to learn them and some more thoughtful habits for using them.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released its own principles for “AI and the Future of Teaching and Learning.” Based on those and on our own research for *The AI Dilemma: 7 Principles for Responsible Technology* — here are five points that school leaders can use to develop their approach to responsible AI.

In the right context and with the right guardrails, it may bring productivity gains for teachers, and some level of personalized learning for students.

1. **Emphasize humans in the loop.** Above all, don't delegate teaching to AI; don't shut kids in with a chatbot as their primary teacher. AI provides a seductive illusion of control, but real education requires consistent human-to-human contact. Use the tools, and work with the tools, but always with human presence and awareness.

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2. **Embrace “creative friction.”** Digital technology is typically designed to *reduce* mental tedium, but that frictionlessness can backfire, especially in a school setting. Quality use of GenAI in education requires conscious attention to its practices. Bring together groups of people with diverse perspectives (ideally including students) to decide what you will and will not do.
3. **Prioritize trust – especially with data.** In schools, this means learning how to verify that data is used in trustworthy ways. Digital systems for student evaluation are often mistrusted because they reflect long-standing biases. The “cold data” – quantitative statistics about student performance – can often place students from vulnerable groups into special ed paths which they don’t fit, and which short-change their future. “Warm data,” as Nora Bateson calls it, should be part of every decision. This might include stories and observations that can be used to truly see children and help them realize their potential.
4. **Open the closed box.** Aim for AI projects to be explainable, so that other people can question and learn from them. Provide visibility into the logic of the algorithm and the model of any student data project, including why the data was collected, and how it could be safeguarded. Train students and teachers until explainability becomes second nature. It won’t always be easy, because machine learning, by its nature, doesn’t always track its sources or reasoning. Learn to recognize how different assumptions, reflected in the model, can lead to different outcomes.
5. **Hold stakeholders accountable.** As we’ve seen with social media, digital technology can be used to bully others. Students (and sometimes teachers) can use AI to create deepfakes and false information; some will be tempted to plagiarize. Make it clear why boundaries are necessary. Point out that the same GenAI program used for a class assignment may deliver the same draft to others. Misusers of AI may not always be caught, but they should know that these are high-stakes tools, to be handled with at least as much care as a car.
6. **Reclaim data rights for students and parents.** This will be difficult. Like all institutions and organizations, schools are used to collecting personal data and choosing how they use it – within legal guidelines. With GenAI tools, students

will create and collect their own data: about who they are, where they go, who they spend time with, what they look up, and what they think and feel. They should have control over how this data is used and be conscious about how it is shared.

In developing practices like these for GenAI in K-12 schools, educators are not just creating safeguards for particular applications. They are establishing risk awareness and safe innovation as a way of life for a generation of young people.

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