



# Webinar Debrief

## Leadership through Continued Uncertainty

NEASC Forum, February 1, 2022

*At the NEASC Forum webinar presented on February 1st a panel of school leaders shared their insights and lessons learned on leadership from the ever-evolving events of the last two years.*

*The panel featured seven school heads representing large and small student populations; public and private schools; religious (Catholic, Islamic) and secular education; longstanding and newly founded schools; and school communities from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.*

*As articulated by one of our panelists “school leadership can be lonely”. This Forum was organized to be a space where all school leaders can feel part of a global community of educators. It was a powerful time of connection and support with several hundred educators joining the discussion from around the world.*

If you couldn't join the live event, you can view the webinar recording along with a list of related resources online: [View recording](#) | [Browse resources in the Forum archives](#)

Below are excerpts of the advice shared by our panelists on leadership lessons learned over these past two years:

“Understanding that our schools are so much more than just learning organizations. The last two years have highlighted our role as schools in our local communities and how much our students need from us.”

*Mary Anne Moran, Principal, Massachusetts, USA*

“Don't be afraid to challenge existing systems and structures. There was this moment in the summer of 2020 we were all waiting for someone above us to step in with a plan for how we were going to do this, but no one really knew what to do. So, I think one of the takeaways has been that you can create something new. Challenge what's existing.”

*Caitlin Murphy, Headmaster, Massachusetts, USA*

“Recognizing that if everything is an emergency then nothing is an emergency. So really being able to take in information and recognizing the changes that are happening. Being flexible, and with clear thoughts attack problems or challenges as they arise.”

*Gary B. Franklin, Principal, Connecticut, USA*

“One lesson has been to learn the importance of conveying a sense of strength and confidence and being assertive- but also accept uncertainty. Its ok if you don't know everything. Being the leader doesn't mean having all the answers.”

*Melani Horcajuelo Torres, Director, Spain*



“The emotional wellness of our faculty is often tied to their sense of how well they are serving their students and their frustrations or concerns about not being able to meet the level or kinds of needs that they haven’t encountered before. So we, as leaders, must structure opportunities to hear from teachers about what those experiences are as far as the new learning landscape and individual concerns and then we can problem-solve together.”

*Erin Mayo, Head of School, Maine, USA*

“Flexibility - how do we flex to meet the needs of our students? Keep an open mind and don’t be married to any one solution or one way of doing things. The situation is going to change today, tomorrow, or a week from now.”

*Dan Richard, Head of School, Rhode Island, USA*

“The amount of information can be truly overwhelming and the biggest part of my role lately as a school leader is to be sort of the ‘communication digestion chief’ – and so I take in all of the information and then figure out what the staff need to know in order to be able to move forward and do their work. I parse through and figure out what people need to know versus what is something I can manage or I can hold on to and what are the key pieces of information that will help us move forward without causing additional anxiety.”

*Caitlin Murphy, Headmaster, Massachusetts, USA*

“Adaptability and developing a growth mindset- which allows you to challenge those cognitive biases surrounding education that it can be taught only one way and only in one space. This has been really a growth opportunity to rethink the narrative about how children learn.”

*Ahmed Geddy, Academic Director, Dubai*

“Our capacity to change. In schools we thought about change coming slowly and in increments. But we’ve proven to everyone in education over the course of the last two years that we were able to move quickly- whether adjusting schedules, health and safety protocols, how we are assessing, or how we are using technology.”

*Mary Anne Moran, Principal, Massachusetts, USA*

“You don’t have to be afraid to go it alone as a school but don’t go it alone as a school leader. We convened a series of working groups of faculty and administration; when we had the collective sense it was much easier for me to go and get the resources I needed from my central office and say- this is our plan, our whole school wants to do this and our teachers are excited about doing this.”

*Caitlin Murphy, Headmaster, Massachusetts, USA*

“Clearly this pandemic has fractured community to an extent, and we are with intention working on rebuilding the community; but you can’t rebuild what wasn’t there, so the importance of community as a foundation is critical.”

*Gary B. Franklin, Principal, Connecticut, USA*

“There is no such thing as too much communication.”

*Erin Mayo, Head of School, Maine, USA*