


# Own Your Leadership Story

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# Framing and Norms

- **Make today about you**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Take what you need; share what feels safe**

# Getting to know you

- Who are you?
- Why are you here?

Pairs & Share out - 15 minutes

# Why do you need to tell your story?

### It’s a leadership skill

Your narrative tells people why they should follow you. Practice makes telling it easier.

### Clarity

Your values are your common thread. When you know what you stand for, you can act under pressure.

### Someone else already is

A narrative is already formed about you. Own your story and tell people who you are.

# Why else?

**Heading into a search**

Committees decide fast and remember a clear story.

**Discerning what's next**

Writing your story shows patterns that shine light on your path ahead.

# About Me

- Coach, Workshop Facilitator, Consultant
- Head of School (18 yrs)
- Division Head (5 yrs)
- Teacher (11 yrs)
- School Founder (Public Charter in Boston, temporary PK - 8 in Houston)

*“The single story creates stereotypes.”*

*- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

# Tell Your Story

- Understand how **your identity shapes your story**
- Which **values** will you always stand for?
- How to **reclaim your story** when another narrative is out there
- There’s still **another chapter** to write

# Core Identity

# What makes up your core identity?

- Think: stories of family, cultures, communities that shaped you early on

- Identify: key moments where your core identity showed up in your leadership

Journal - 5 mins
Partner share - 8 mins

# Partner Share: Tell, Listen, Notice

## Storyteller

What were early influences that shaped your core identity?

What are key moments where your core identity has shown in your leadership style?

## Listener

Notice body language, emotions, specific words, and phrases.

Share back what you noticed, no interpretations.

Ask clarifying questions.

Thank your partner for sharing / listening.

# Core Values

*“I have learned over the years that when one’s mind is made up, this diminishes fear.”*

*– Rosa Parks*

# What values will you always stand by?

- Start by: Listing as many core values as come to mind (1 min)
- Identify: 3 values that have shown up consistently in your life (1 min)
- Journal: Write about a time at work when one or more of your core values was tested. How did your values guide you? (5 mins)

# Partner Share: Tell, Listen, Notice

## Storyteller

Share your top 3 values.

Share your values story.

What did you notice in telling this story?

## Listener

Notice body language, emotions, specific words, and phrases.

Share back what you noticed, no interpretations.

Ask clarifying questions.

Thank your partner for sharing / listening.

# Fire

## by Nikita Gill

Remember what you must do
when they undervalue you,
when they think
your softness is your weakness,
when they treat your kindness
like it is their advantage.

You awaken
every dragon,
every wolf,
every monster
that is inside you
and you remind them
what hell looks like
when it wears the skin
of a gentle human.

# Women in Leadership: Reclaim Your Story

# Leadership Styles

- **Authoritative:** inspiring, visionary, communicates the big picture, pushes people and orgs to excel
- **Participative/Democratic:** inclusive, not top-down, morale-builder, flexible and creative, distributive leadership
- **Affiliative/Relational:** empathetic, unselfish, community builder, able to develop cultures of high trust
- **Pacesetter:** Strong work ethic, sets high expectations for self and expects others to follow

# Research on Women in Leadership

- The Double Bind:
  Warm, emotionally vulnerable = weak
  Strong, decisive = harsh/aggressive

- Scapegoating:
  When a woman or minority fails, blame is placed on the individual rather than the systemic issues

- Damaged Career Trajectories:
  Unlike men who bounce laterally or upward after failed leadership, women face a downward career trend

# What Is the Glass Cliff?

Aug 20, 2024 - Molly M. Kruse

You may have heard a certain term used lately: glass cliff. This phrase describes a phenomenon in which women are elevated to leadership positions more often in times of crisis than during more prosperous times — setting them up for failure. Such an action gives the illusion of diversity, while letting organizations off the hook to once again promote a man to the leadership role if the woman "fails" to salvage the situation.

# How Is It Related to the Glass Ceiling?

The concept of a glass ceiling describes any unseen or unacknowledged barrier keeping minorities from advancing to leadership positions or public office. The term was invented in 1978 and has been studied extensively since.

Since glass is transparent, the word is used in both glass ceiling and glass cliff to describe a structure that is invisible but durable. In both phrases, glass is a metaphor for the structural barriers that certain groups of people face that are invisible to other, more privileged groups.

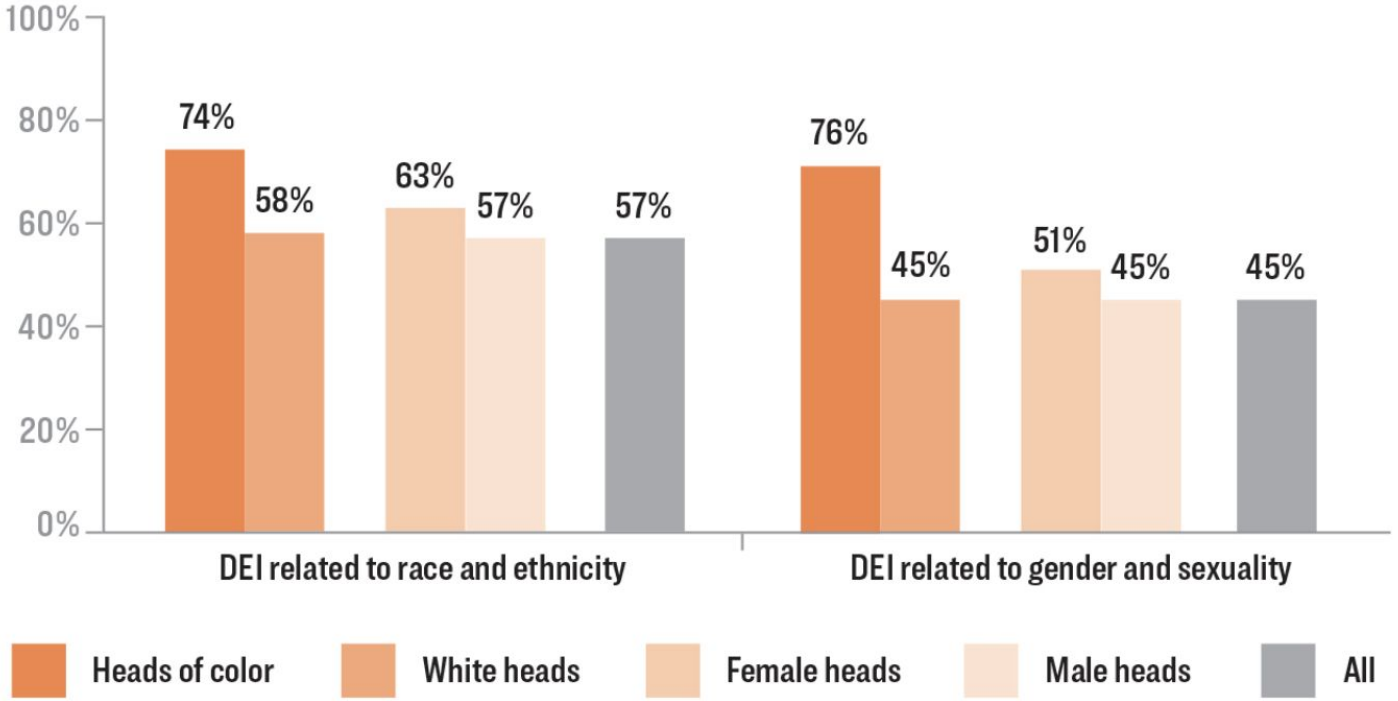
National Association of *Independent* Schools

*"…[T]he researchers found that* ***minoritized leaders often work in less favorable conditions than their white or male counterparts.*** *For example, in comparison to male heads of school, female heads typically serve in smaller elementary or K–8 schools with a higher proportion of students applying for financial aid, lower yield rates, and fewer teachers.*

*Despite ongoing efforts to increase diversity in leadership positions, underrepresentation persists due to higher turnover rates and less favorable evaluation results for minoritized leaders. The appointment of leaders during times of crisis, such as the pandemic, makes objective evaluation complicated. These leaders often experience significant stress and pressure and receive limited resources to support their work, and this can greatly hinder their effectiveness."*

Yubin Jang, Lauren Bailes, Sarah Odell, NAIS Resource Center Research: Executive Summary of *"Who Leads During and After a Crisis? The Pandemic's Role in Diversifying School Leadership,"* Dec 19, 2025.

## Chart 1: Heads' Engagement with Race/Ethnicity and Gender/Sexuality




NAIS Independent School Magazine, Fall 2023

*Margaret Anne Rowe, Research Insights: "An In-Depth Look at the NAIS Report on Polarization in Schools"*

# Discuss:

- **What is a specific experience you've had that resonates with one of the examples just presented?**

- Leadership Styles: Authoritative, Democratic, Affiliative, Pacesetter
- Women's Leadership Issues (Double Bind, Scapegoating, Downward Career Trajectories)
- Glass Cliff
- Impact of DEI-related issues on women heads/heads of color

*“When I use my strength in service of my vision it makes no difference whether or not I am afraid.”*

*- Audre Lorde*

# Retell In Your Own Words...

- What is an assumption that has been made about you as a woman in leadership, and what would you like people to understand about you instead?

- What's a leadership strength of yours that you want others to know about?

- Journal: (5 mins)

  Partner share - 7 mins

# Your Next Chapter

# What threads lead you to the next chapter?

- What's a thread that runs through every chapter of your story? What are the things you keep doing or caring about as a leader?

- Write the first 2-3 sentences of your next chapter. Begin with, "This next chapter is about..."what you're leading *towards,* not away from.

- Journal: (5 mins)

  Partner share - 7 mins

# What does success look like?

- What do you care most about accomplishing?
- What will have happened if you succeed?
- Journal: (2 mins)

  Partner share - 5 mins



## ***Wellness Check***

*by Andrea Gibson*

*In any moment*
*on any given day,*
*I can measure*
*my wellness*
*by this question:*

*Is my attention on loving,*
*or is my attention on*
*who isn't loving me?*




# Thank You!

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