



Independent Schools
Association of the Southwest

2025 November Heads Meeting

November 2-4
Hilton Dallas/Park Cities, Dallas, TX

Sunday, November 2

November 2 | 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Miramar & ISAS Standards Committee Meeting (lunch is provided)
Normandy

November 2 | 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Miramar ISAS Board Meeting

November 2 | 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Gathering for New Heads of ISAS Schools

A time for new ISAS Heads to network with each other and ask questions of ISAS Staff

November 2 | 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Beverly A Opening Reception for all Heads of School graciously sponsored by

Dovetailed



November 2 | 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and evening on your own



Monday, November 3

November 3 | 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Beverly A Breakfast Buffet

November 3 | 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Independent School Business: Revenue Drivers, Expense Levers, and Innovation

Beverly B&C The traditional independent school business model likely feels particularly daunting in the current environment. This session will break down key components of the model, which is largely driven by tuition revenue and operating expenses dominated by compensation and rising benefits costs. Shields and Palmieri will offer expertise and insights into trends you are facing and strategies your peers are employing at independent schools nationwide to help lead toward a sustainable present and financially healthy future. Learn more about NBOA's original research, including the NBOA Financial State of Industry Report, NBOA Tuition Discounting Study, and other valuable tools and resources available to support independent school business leaders including NBOA's Mission Anchored Compensation Strategies research findings.

Jeffrey Shields, NBOA President and CEO

James Palmieri, CEO, NBOA Advisory Services

November 3 | 10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Break

November 3 | 10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Take This Advancement Job and Staff It

Beverly B&C Advancement staffing got you down? You're not the only head of school worried about securing and keeping top-notch fundraising professionals, who are critical to gaining, maintaining, and accelerating fundraising momentum. This session will explore the ways that heads of school can attract and retain strong fundraisers, partner effectively with advancement staff, and spur philanthropic growth. What should a Head be asking—and asking of—the school's fundraising team? How much time should a Head devote to advancement? What is the highest and best use of advancement staff? Why do great advancement staff leave...and underperformers stay? When is the right time to change or augment advancement staffing? Attend to have these questions answered and bring some of your own!

Elizabeth Kolb Farr, Principal and Independent Schools Practice Leader, Huron | GG+A



November 3 | 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Beverly A Lunch graciously hosted by



November 3 | 1:00 – 2:15 p.m.

Supporting Students Post-Kerrville Floods

Beverly B&C This session will discuss the impact of the July 4th Kerrville floods on students' emotional and mental health. We'll look at how your school can best support students who have suffered trauma related to the flood and to other circumstances to minimize continued trauma in the years ahead.

Lauren Gaspar, Owner, Good Mourning Counseling Center

November 3 | 2:15 – 2:45 p.m.

Break

November 3 | 2:45 – 3:45 p.m.

Panel Discussion: Pastoral Care in Independent Schools

Beverly B&C Your role as head of school requires many “hats” and one which has grown with increasing frequency and importance is that of pastoral care. Join a panel of your peers as we discuss various perspectives in fostering strong systems that nurture support, well-being, belonging, and character development. Panelists will discuss strategies for supporting school communities through challenges, building trusting relationships, and aligning pastoral care with each school's mission and values. There will be opportunities for all attendees to share experiences and lessons learned for the benefit of the group.

Panelists:

Ted Graf, Headwaters School

Meshea Matthews, St. John's Episcopal School

Chris Gunnin, St. Stephen's Episcopal School

Leanne Reynolds, River Oaks Baptist School

November 3 | 3:45 – 4:00 p.m.

Break



November 3 | 4:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Hear From Your Peers

This is an opportunity for you to ask questions of your peers on any subject. Questions can be submitted by [clicking this link](#). The questions received will be posed to the room, and the group will answer them together during this session.

November 3 | 4:30 p.m.

Dinner and evening on your own

Tuesday, November 4

November 4 | 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Beverly A Breakfast Buffet

November 4 | 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Unleashing the Power of Hope: The Science Behind Transformative Leadership

Beverly B&C The most powerful leaders don't just manage teams— they give people hope. This keynote session unpacks the Science of Hope as a cognitive framework that fuels visionary thinking, resilience in uncertainty, and the kind of leadership people want to follow. Hope-based leadership gives you the tools to inspire action by creating the conditions where people believe a better future is possible—and that they have a role in making it real.

Molly Kawahata, speaker, strategist, ice climber

November 4 | 9:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Break

November 4 | 10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

Heads Membership Meeting

Beverly B&C Attendance is required.

November 4 | 11:15 a.m.

Adjournment

2025 November Heads Meeting

Speakers

Elizabeth Kolb Farr



An independent school alumna, Liz enjoyed a successful 27-year career teaching and fundraising in independent schools before starting her consulting career. In her role at Huron | GG+A, Liz leads the team of consultants who advise independent schools in accelerating fundraising revenue. She was a primary contributor to NAIS book *The Trustee's Role in Fundraising* and wrote the feature article, "The Importance of Fundraising Strategy," in the spring 2021 issue of NAIS' *Independent School* magazine. She is also a recipient of the CASE Crystal Apple Award for Teaching Excellence, recognizing her skill and performance over the past two decades in educating others about fundraising best practices. Liz's current and recent ISAS clients include: The Episcopal School of Dallas, Greenhill School, Holland Hall, The Kinkaid School, Parish Episcopal School, Saint Mary's Hall, St. John's Episcopal School, and Wichita Collegiate School.

Lauren Gaspar



Lauren Gaspar has almost 25 years of experience in ethical and innovative clinical care in agency, educational, and private practice settings. She is an experienced trauma therapist, group facilitator, sexual abuse evaluator, field instructor, clinical supervisor, clinical consultant, workshop facilitator, and lecturer with licensing as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Registered Play Therapist. She specializes in the treatment of children, adolescents, and adult survivors of trauma and complex grief, including long-term work with September 11th family members. Her certifications include Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, as well as an Expert Witness in domestic violence and sexual assault.

She has a BA from The University of Texas at Austin and earned her Master of Social Work at Boston University.

Molly Kawahata



Molly Kawahata is an award-winning speaker, strategist, advocate, and former Climate Advisor at the Obama White House. She is the Founder of Systemic Impact Strategies, a consultancy specializing in organizational development, climate strategy, and communications. Her life story, depicted in Patagonia's film, [THE SCALE OF HOPE](#) (2022), intimately explores her pursuit of climbing steep ice faces in Alaska, her personal journey with mental health, and her work to transform societal narratives by infusing them with hope and empowerment. The film has resonated with audiences worldwide, amassing over one million views on YouTube, streaming on Delta Airlines, and being inducted into the permanent collection at the New York Museum of Modern Art. Molly is an Advisory Board Member to the Environmental Voter Project. In her free time, Molly is an avid ice climber, with a particular passion for scaling technical ice routes in Montana and the Central Alaska Range. An introduction to the film [can be viewed here](#).

James Palmieri



Dr. James Palmieri is executive vice president at NBOA, the only national nonprofit membership association dedicated to developing, delivering, and promoting best business practices to advance PK-12 independent schools, and chief executive officer of NBOA Advisory Services, a subsidiary offering direct-to-school business consulting and CFO executive search services. With a passion for independent education, he joined the NBOA staff in 2018 following thirteen years of experience in school business operations leadership. Palmieri previously served as assistant head of school at Trinity Hall in New Jersey, an independent all-girls high school. He began his work there as a founding consultant and the school's first employee, and had primary responsibility for school finance, facilities, and business operations. Prior to opening Trinity Hall, Palmieri served as director of strategic initiatives and faculty at Kent Place School, a nursery-grade 12 all-girls day school also in New Jersey. Palmieri is currently on the Board of Directors at ATLIS (Association of Technology Leaders in Independent Schools). Previously, he served on the One Schoolhouse Board of Trustees for seven years, including Board Chair from 2021-23. Palmieri earned his doctoral degree in educational leadership from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; his MA in K-12 educational administration

and supervision from Seton Hall University; and his BA in elementary/special education from Providence College.

Jeffrey Shields



Jeff Shields, FASAE, CAE, has served as President and CEO of NBOA: Business Leadership for Independent Schools since March 2010. NBOA is the premier national association serving the needs of business officers and business operations staff at independent schools. The association has grown from 23 founding member schools in 1998 to over 1,200 US member schools, plus member schools in Mexico, Canada, and other countries around the globe during its over 25-year history. Jeff, an active member of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), has been recognized as an ASAE Fellow (FASAE) and earned the Certified Association Executive (CAE) professional designation. His current board service includes serving as a director for AMHIC, a healthcare consortium for educational associations in Washington, DC, as well as a trustee for E3n (formerly Enrollment Management Association.) Previous board service included, serving as a director for the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), as a director for One Schoolhouse, an innovative online school offering supplemental education to independent schools, and Georgetown Day School, in Washington, DC. Shields holds a BA from Shippensburg University and an MA from The Ohio State University. And he is the proud father of his 19-year-old daughter, Samantha, a sophomore at Penn State University.