

Riverbank Colleagues: The Resource Leaders Need to Take on The Next Rapids

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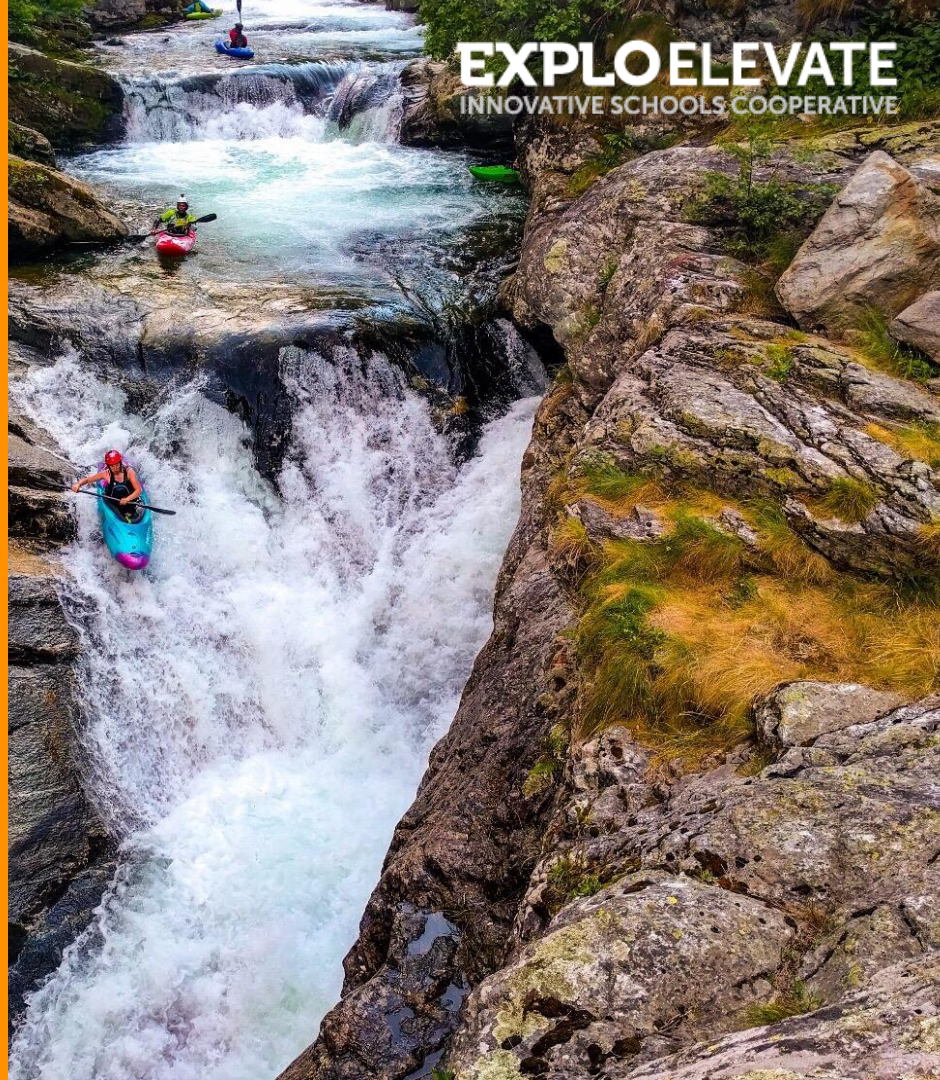
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Progress Culture

Big Goal:

to transform the school into a **Progress Culture**, in which normal will include the ongoing ability to reflect on and respond to a changing world.

COVID19 requires not that we imagine the world will reach a new normal or stasis, but rather that we create within our school a new normal regarding how we respond to an ever changing world.



Spring 2020
was a **Resilience**
moment.

Resilient



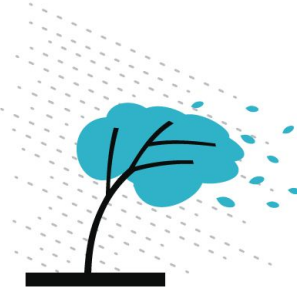
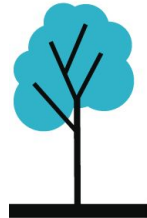
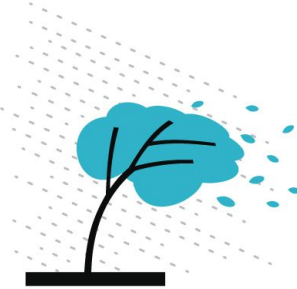
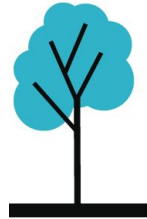
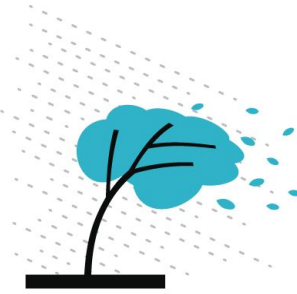
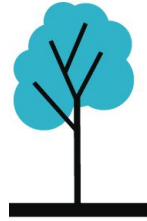
Fall 2020
is an **Antifragility**
moment.

Anti-Fragile



Anti-Fragility and Resilience

Anti-fragility: something that becomes stronger or more successful because of a force acting against it, versus something that is built just to withstand a force acting against it (resilience).



But there's more...

(everything in every news cycle right now seems like this!)

...institutional goals cannot be simply to withstand or survive challenges.

Schools and leaders must aim to thrive in an EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT.



If March 2020 required reactivity...
(instinctual)

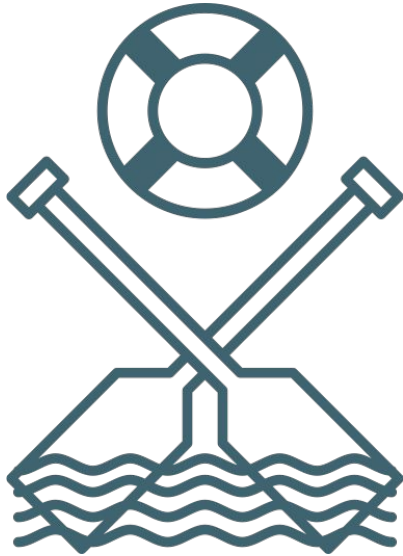
then Fall 2020 will require adaptability...
(strategic)



There is a need for a new type of support for heads and other types of leaders in schools in this moment and going forward.



SUPPORT



Abstract: Heads of School/ Individual Admin Team members need a kind of support that they are not receiving, and it will limit their effectiveness during this unprecedented time of Covid19 and national reckoning with systemic racism.

Additionally, this structure will be necessary in the Post-Covid world no matter what it looks like.



**Highly talented,
well-meaning, hollow-eyed,
and isolated leadership is
NOT ENOUGH.**





The River Metaphor

The **Riverbank Colleague** can meet this support need and help position leaders and schools to rise to meet the challenges downstream.



What We See

Traditional support
structures can't bear
the weight of need

Heads stuck in
reactive loops of
decision-making

No ability to call
timeout/don't know
what to do if they
had one

Denying
themselves oxygen,
while trying to provide
it for others

Losing composure
necessary for
quality
decision-making

PTSD-like behavior in
the community.
People's emotions
need to be tended to





What We Are Hearing From Heads

PERSONAL

Compassion
fatigue

Absence of joy
in job for some
time

Not taking time off
either vacation or
even during the
course of a day

Head not allowed
to get caught up
in the swirl of
emotions



What We Are Hearing From Heads

INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS

Having to make an unending
series of compromises that
makes no one happy.
Not optimizing anything.

The personnel issues people
should have dealt with before
but they lived with are now
coming back to bite them.



What We Are Hearing From Heads

INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS

Lots of people in the community cannot deal with uncertainty so they want answers now about reopening, but the head is not in a position to give definitive answers since things with COVID are fluid.

Newer heads without strong ties to the community – faculty, boards, parents, students – are getting second guessed or at least decisions getting scrutinized more so than head who have been in communities for awhile.



What We Are Hearing From Heads

MANAGING UP AND DOWN

Some administrators have had meltdowns or are not functioning well so heads are working with only a partial admin team or they are working around certain people.

Board doesn't exactly know how to best support heads. The Board often wants to be helpful but even the best intent can eat up the bandwidth of heads as they are tempted to crossover into operations.

Summer admissions melt underway.



What We Are Hearing From Heads

EXISTENTIAL

Have to stay the course with the strategic changes made Pre-COVID or the school won't be in business in three years, but time is getting gobbled up with reacting to the operational issues related to COVID.

Schools today want leaders who will increase accountability, innovation, and alignment to values— three very difficult goals. Almost all schools must change to be perceived to be relevant and compelling and they must deliver their program with a consistently high level of excellence.



What We Are Hearing From Heads

EXISTENTIAL

Head is supposed to be so charismatic and strategic that their employees will be inspired to undertake very difficult changes.

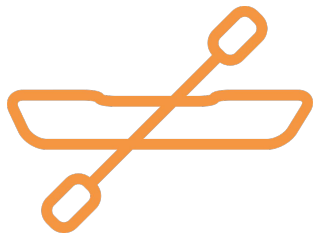
Possibility of job failure increases when you add COVID and any genuine desire to be inclusive and equitable.

YIKES!

...Back to the River Metaphor--it feels
safer there!

Underlying our belief is the idea that Headship can be, should be, **must be** a manageable job.






Working with a **Riverbank Colleague** is part of what heads can do to take care of themselves.

Heads owe it to the people they are leading to notice opportunities and challenges before others, to have bandwidth for strategic thinking, and to adapt in order to lead school no matter what the future holds.

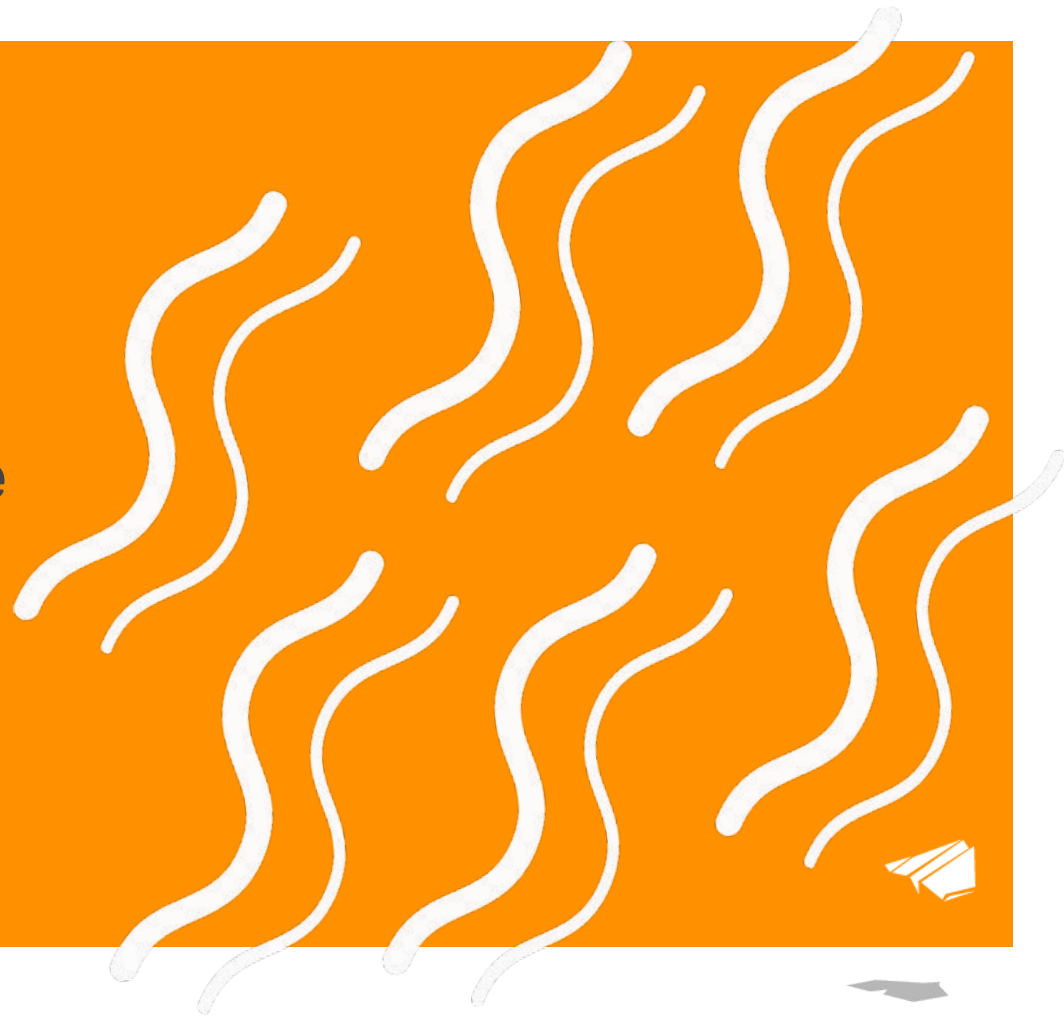




Thus, heads of school,
like whitewater paddlers,
need eddies--**they need
to recognize the
importance of tending
to personal** well-being to
their ability to do the job
ahead.



**The Riverbank
Colleague is here...
on the shore beside
the eddy**



Here is what a **Riverbank Colleague** can do



SCOUTING

They have scouted ahead, listened to other paddlers who have already traveled this way.



ANALYSIS

They can sort the feedback of those other paddlers in order to edit the scouting report for what is most valuable.



INSIGHT

They can provide their personal insight having traveled this river (or one a bit like it) before.



More on what the **Riverbank Colleague** can do



They can bolster the paddler's confidence and cheer them on.



They can, when necessary, advise caution if the paddler is considering a route that is dangerous.



They can provide a safe, confidential place to express frustration, fear or concern.



They can celebrate the victories of the paddler.



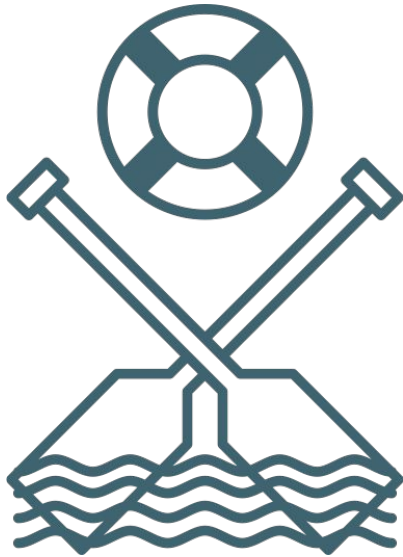
Highly successful heads
need support now they
have not felt they needed
in the past.



The struggle we have seen in Heads through our work at EXPLO Elevate reveals that heads know they have a need, but they either don't know what might help, or they don't know it is OK to ask for it.



SUPPORT



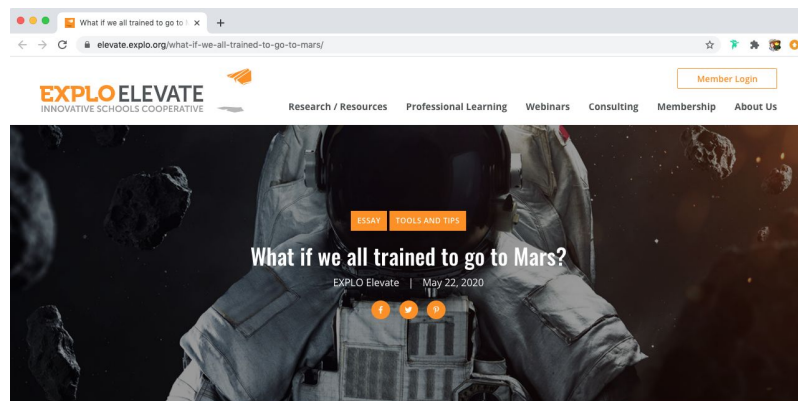
They may also feel as if expressing a need for this kind of support will reveal a weakness they would rather keep to themselves.

Many heads are not used to feeling the type of isolation they are feeling right now, and they don't know how to respond to what feels like a vacuum of support.



This includes heads who have very high Adaptability Quotients (please see Moira Kelly's great piece on AQ entitled, *"What if we all trained to go to Mars?"*)

--no Head is immune.



This post is part of a series of articles, blog posts, and short briefs produced by EXPLO Elevate focused on supporting schools' virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

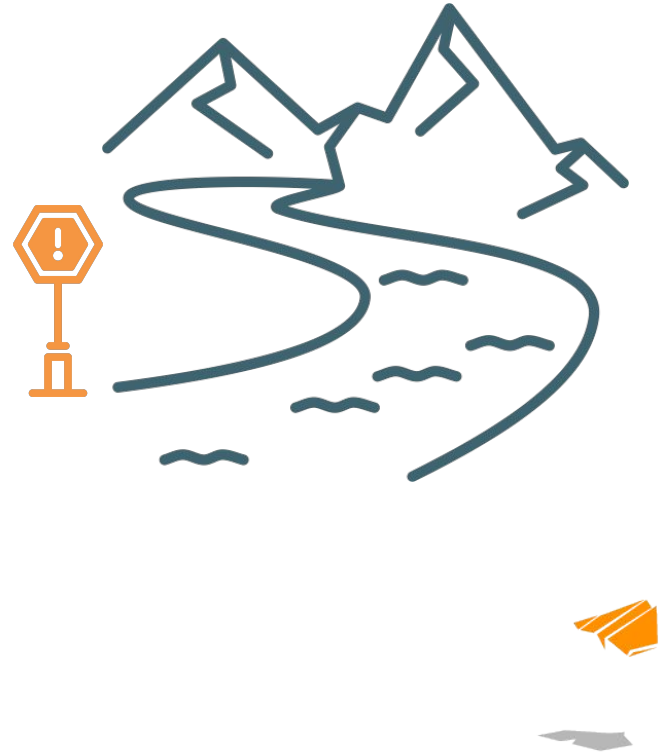
by Moira Kelly | President, EXPLO Elevate

I'm seeing the cracks. We're in our 9th week of home seclusion in the Age of COVID. Schools are shuttered for the rest of the year. Businesses not on life support are wheezing.

Much of how people are doing depends on their circumstances. Has your household been infected with the virus? Do you still have a job? If you do, do you have young children at home? Can you get any work done? Do you have a yard that allows you to get out a bit?

Life is different for those with their health, some money, and a bit of space, but even in these privileged groups, some are not faring well. Some are paralyzed. Others are having meltdowns. Some are mired in ruminating about what has been lost. Friends. Freedom. Control. Simply living day-to-day has become a tremendous challenge.

There are warning signs up for the river ahead, for the school year to come, and even though there are a number of significant challenges pressing for leaders' attention, it must remain a priority to take care of themselves and create the necessary support structures to ensure their well being and sustainability in the job.





**Ensuring a Head's connection to,
as well as the accessibility of, a
Riverbank Colleague is necessary
to be ready for both the
challenges and remarkable
opportunities of what is to come.**



Some things we are working on:

Riverbank
Colleague--Sounding
Board/Good Counsel
for Leaders

Adaptability Quotient

Pre-Mortem Process
of 2020-2021 school
reopening plans

Agile Course Design
(Elastic Proximity)

Virtuous Leadership
Course



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