

To: All Heads of NAIS Schools
From: The Edward E. Ford Foundation
John C. Gulla, Executive Director
Date: September, 2015

For over 55 years, the Edward E. Ford Foundation has made grants to independent schools throughout the United States. Over 800 different schools have received over 2,000 grants from the Foundation totaling over \$100,000,000. The Foundation has long encouraged, and now requires, matching funds to be raised as a part of its application process so as to leverage even greater philanthropic support for independent schools. These matching grants now exceed an additional \$110,000,000 in total support generated for NAIS schools.

This is my first such communication to you as the EE Ford Executive Director. I came to this work after 35 years in 4 different independent schools in 3 different parts of the country, including 14 years in Minneapolis where I was head of The Blake School. Other than the announcement of my appointment that was mailed to you in October, 2012, I believe the most recent communication from the Foundation to all NAIS member schools was from my predecessor, Bob Hallett, in December, 2011.

I'm pleased to report to you that since the last letter you received from us, three new members have joined the Advisory Board. Mr. Hallett was elected after he retired as the Foundation's Executive Director and he has been joined by Mrs. Suzanne W. Menard and Ms. Elizabeth Duffy. After many years of service, Mr. Philip Havens, who had also earlier served as Executive Director, and Mr. John Prentiss have ended their terms on the Board.

This memo details a considerable amount of information about the Foundation, much of which is also available on our website. One very important item of news from the Foundation is buried toward the end of this comprehensive, information-laden letter and I strongly urge you to make your way through to the end so as not to miss it!

For reasons I understand, NAIS only permits use of their head of school address list for hard copy letters sent through the US mail. This prevents me from providing you in this format the hyperlinks to certain pages of the Foundation's website and results, therefore, in a somewhat longer document than might be ideal given the always busy lives of school heads. Nonetheless, I wanted to inform all of you of the work of the Foundation, alert you to some of the changes that have taken place and to indicate some of what we have planned for our future as a Foundation, as well as to tell you about the aforementioned special news. Given the size and range of the audience of this memorandum, I will be both general and specific. Some of you know us well and have recently received EE Ford grants. Others of you are either new to independent schools or to the role of head and may never have heard of the EE Ford Foundation. I hope that you make the time to read through this entire document.

What follows is a summary of the Foundation's annual calendar of meetings and our processes for considering requests for funding, some of the most important criteria for eligibility, and a number of important suggestions that can make your work with the Foundation easier for you and for us. There is also a description of some of the plans now underway for a redesign of the Foundation's website. We hope to make it a more interactive and helpful tool for schools pursuing grants from us. We would also like to make the website a more valuable resource that could be utilized more broadly by many independent schools looking to learn from or connect with other schools that may be pursuing similar initiatives. Finally, I want to alert you to an opportunity that the Board is planning for April, 2017.

The Edward E. Ford Foundation in Brief

Established in 1959 by Edward E. Ford, the Foundation's Advisory Board adopted a mission statement in 2011 that guides the awarding of grants consistent with the terms of the trust as established by Mr. Ford.

The Edward E. Ford Foundation Mission Statement

The mission of The Edward E. Ford Foundation is to strengthen and support independent secondary schools and to challenge and inspire them to leverage their unique talents, expertise and resources to advance teaching and learning throughout this country by supporting and disseminating best practice, by supporting efforts to develop and implement models of sustainability, and by encouraging collaboration with other institutions.

We schedule three grant-making cycles annually (what the Foundation calls Agendas) in June, November and April. The June and November Agendas are when the Advisory Board considers **School-initiated** proposals. Schools that meet the eligibility criteria (see below) may pursue a grant for any purpose that the school head believes will assist and support the school in its work. The April Agenda is when the Board considers **Foundation-initiated** or Leadership Grant proposals.

Eligibility Criteria for All Proposals to the Foundation (School-initiated and Foundation-initiated)

- Schools must be members in good standing of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), serve students in grades 9-12 and be located in the United States or its territories. Eligible schools can be K-12 or 6-PG but schools without an Upper School division, that is, for example, schools enrolling students only in K-6 or K-8 are, by terms of the trust, ineligible.
- Regional, state and local associations that include eligible schools are also eligible to apply.
- The school or association must have a mission to serve a diverse population.
- If a school or association has received a grant from the Foundation in the past it must have shown that it has been a good steward of our philanthropy. This includes timely submission of stewardship reports and appropriate accounting for any past grants that included funds for permanently restricted endowments.
- Matching funds need to be given specifically for the match. Please see the Foundation's website for more details concerning the criteria for the matching funds.
- For schools with significant financial resources, there is an expectation that the school will seek funding from the Foundation to "leverage its unique talents, expertise and resources to advance teaching and learning" more broadly and not just to benefit the school itself.

There are additional details concerning these eligibility criteria that may be of interest to schools that want to pursue a grant. Additional information can be found on the website.

Brief Description of the School-initiated Proposal Process

The process for the School-initiated grants that are considered by the Advisory Board each June and November has remained essentially the same for many years. In addition to the eligibility criteria listed above that apply to all Foundation grants, those pursuing School-initiated grants should note that:

- The Head of School must have served in the role at that school for a minimum of two full years before a proposal to the Foundation can be considered and the Head must plan to continue in that role for a full year beyond the date when the Board would consider the proposal.
- The Head of School must request a place on an upcoming June or November Agenda by calling the Executive Director and having a conversation about the process. The Executive Director will discuss any school-specific issues, eligibility criteria or other questions or concerns with the school head during this conversation.
- Schools cannot have had a proposal, successful or not, that has come before the Board within the last four years.
- The Advisory Board will consider proposals for School-initiated grants with requests of up to \$50,000 that must be matched by additional funds raised at a ratio of at least 1:1.

After a school head contacts the Executive Director and secures placement on an upcoming Agenda, the next step in the process is to find a time for the school head to travel to Brooklyn and meet with the Executive Director in the Foundation's office. The meeting takes approximately 2 hours. Once the meeting has been scheduled, but no less than one week before it takes place, the school will need to submit a completed online application. At that meeting the school head and the Executive Director discuss the school, its history, the current challenges and opportunities, the school's finances and the ideas the school head may have for the school's proposal. The final draft of the proposal, along with other supporting documents (operating budget, recent audit, school profile, etc.), are due to the office by September 15th for schools on the November Agenda and by April 1st for schools on the June Agenda. The Executive Director will visit the campuses of as many of the schools as he can during the months preceding each Agenda. The Board makes its decisions about the proposals when it meets in June or November and the Executive Director communicates this decision within days to the school head. Successful schools have a little more than a year to raise the required matching funds and to provide the required documentation. Once the school has submitted the documentation, the EE Ford grant is paid by the bank that serves as the Foundation's trustee. The Foundation looks for a stewardship report from the school. The exact timing and format of this report are up to the school but it should be submitted soon after the funds have been spent and should reflect the proposal that the Foundation had approved.

The Foundation expects its funds to be spent, that is, we expect our funds to be used as a part of the school's annual operating budget. (While in the past, EE Ford did make endowment grants, it no longer does so, though the matching funds raised by the school can be placed in a permanently restricted endowment.) Schools that would have cash flow challenges in implementing their successful proposals are allowed to document partial fulfillment of the match and can receive a *pro rata* payment on the grant. Most schools propose to spend the grant over a period of one or two fiscal years. Generally, the Foundation will consider approximately 25 proposals each June and November and historically will support between 66% and 75% of the completed proposals.

Again, these are the highlights of the process and more information can be found on the website or by contacting the office.

Brief Description of the Foundation-initiated or Leadership Grant Process

About a decade ago, the EE Ford Foundation decided to take one of the three Agendas and change it from a School-initiated grant-making process, which has been the Foundation's primary practice since its inception, and create a Foundation-initiated grant-making cycle (what we call Leadership Grants) in which fewer, much larger grants would be made to schools that would be invited to submit a proposal in response to a challenge posed by the Foundation. This is now our approach for each April Agenda. These Leadership Grant proposals can include requests for up to \$250,000 and must be matched by additional funds raised at a ratio of at least 1:1. Unlike the June and November Agendas when schools come to us seeking to be placed on an Agenda with a request to have us consider funding a project or program of the school's choosing, the Leadership Grant program is by invitation only. Schools don't come to us to pursue Leadership Grants, we find them. For these Foundation-initiated proposals, we require that the school head have been in the role for for a minimum of three years (it is two years for School-initiated proposals) and plan to stay for at least one full year after the April in which a decision would be made on the proposal.

Each year, usually at the April meeting, the Advisory Board will establish a "framing question" that will give a broad focus to the area of independent school work we'd like to see addressed in the subsequent cycle of Leadership Grant proposals. The framing question is usually an effort to describe a challenge or an opportunity facing independent schools, an area of school work that the Foundation Board believes would benefit from creative, original, innovative, sometimes experimental practices, approaches or partnerships in fulfillment of the mission-inspired work of independent schools.

Distilled examples of past framing questions (the full framing questions have usually been longer and more detailed) include:

- a. How might a school more effectively attract and retain the best teachers and administrators?
- b. How might the EE Ford Foundation help your school pursue a "disruptive innovation"?
- c. How does your school pursue the "public purpose" of your private school? How might we help?

The Foundation Board wants these Leadership Grants to be generative. We seek proposals that are innovative and creative, proposals that can be replicated at other schools and that might have a ripple effect throughout the world of NAIS schools.

The Leadership Grant process for the April Agenda operates independently of the School-initiated grant process followed in June and November. A school invited to pursue a Leadership Grant does not forfeit its spot in the queue to pursue a School-initiated grant. Given the size of these grants and depending on the finances of the school that makes a successful proposal, school heads may want to know that the Foundation allows for the match to be documented in tranches and for the school to receive partial payments on the grants.

Once the framing question for a subsequent cycle has been established by the Board, the Executive Director is asked to invite a small group of selected schools to submit preliminary proposals by October 15th. These preliminary proposals are reviewed by a sub-committee of the Board at the November meeting resulting in a smaller group of schools that are asked to submit finalist proposals. There are usually about 8-10 semifinalists and 4-5 finalists. The Board prefers to allow itself flexibility on an annual basis so what I have described here is not meant to represent a commitment to a precise process or certain numbers of schools but, instead, to describe recent past practice with regard to this April Agenda.

Finalist schools are asked to submit a more detailed proposal with a budget and other supporting documents, including data about the school's operation, by March 1st. The Executive Director will visit the campuses of the finalist schools, usually in the period from January through March. The process for consideration of Leadership Grants also differs from that of School-initiated grants in that the school

heads from each of the finalist schools will meet with the Advisory Board in New York at the April meeting to present their ideas in person and engage in a discussion with the Board. Given the much larger magnitude of the Leadership Grants, schools are also given two years in which to raise the required match (it is just one year for School-initiated grants).

Options for Groups of Schools or Schools with Partners

While grants in all three annual cycles are made to individual schools or associations, the Foundation does allow a group of schools or a school with other non-school partners to bring to the Foundation a proposal on behalf of such a group. One single, eligible school must be responsible for communication with the Foundation and must accept the responsibility to act as fiscal agent for the consortium. Recent examples of successful group proposals (descriptions can be found on the website) include, for Leadership Grants, Parish Episcopal School in Dallas (April, 2015) and Cambridge School of Weston (April, 2011), and in the regular grant cycles of June and November, Deerfield (June, 2015) and Lawrenceville (June, 2012).

Future Plans

Website

The Advisory Board has supported a proposal to undertake a major redesign of the Foundation's website. The two anticipated elements of this redesign of greatest likely interest to you include:

- Creating the capacity of the site to become a more helpful resource for all independent schools by organizing and archiving descriptions of successful proposals in a way that allows visitors to do key word searches of project descriptions. There is a wealth of information on our website that could, if it was more accessible, become an extremely helpful resource for schools exploring everything from the creation of design labs, to community partnerships, to focused professional development programs. We hope to spread the good word of the many successful, creative, innovative, exciting, often replicable, initiatives that we have helped fund (which have numbered between 40-50 projects per year) to the broader world of NAIS schools by making it easier to come to the EE Ford site and find schools that may have already invented the wheel you might be considering creating.
- More interactivity in terms of the online application that will clarify and simplify this process for the Foundation and the schools pursuing grants.

This new site is expected to launch in June, 2016.

Special Grant Opportunity :

April, 2017 Edward E. Ford Collaborative Innovation Grant

At the outset of this memo, I mentioned that I had some significant and exciting news to announce. The EE Ford Advisory Board is planning for a one-time only program in April, 2017. We would like to see proposals that address more ambitious projects that could have greater and more far-reaching impact in the world of independent education than is possible through our Leadership Grants. Some on the Board, invoking the Jim Collins acronym, have called this our BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal). **We now encourage and invite groups of schools, partnering, perhaps, with other organizations, to come to the Foundation with ideas that we might support with a single grant of up to \$2 million to be made in April, 2017. Our grant will have to be matched by additional funds to be raised by the group of schools (and their partners) at a ratio of at least 1:1, allowing us thereby to help the successful group of schools to pursue a project that could have a budget of up to \$4 million.** Those interested in receiving more information about this program are encouraged to contact the Foundation office at office@eeford.org to request a more complete description of the process we expect to follow.

Final Thoughts

There are a number of other important, interesting conversations I have been having with colleagues at NAIS, with the Executive Directors of many of the state and regional associations of independent schools and with other foundations that make grants to independent schools that I hope will continue to inform and shape the work of this Foundation. A year ago, the EE Ford Foundation convened a gathering of a dozen school heads representing as broad a national cross-section of independent schools as possible (day, boarding, single-sex, co-ed, large, small, etc.) while keeping the group small enough to allow for rich and worthwhile discussion. These school heads were asked to consider the opportunities and challenges facing independent schools over the next 5-10 years. The EE Ford Advisory Board listened carefully to this lively and informative discussion as it considered the future of our grants. It was an exchange that both highlighted some of the very real challenges and threats we face as independent schools but that also pointed out the invaluable leadership we can provide in the world of secondary (and elementary) education and the good and important work we do. Anyone who would like a summary of that discussion can obtain it by writing with a request to office@eeford.org with "EE Ford September, 2014 Heads Summit" in the subject line.

It has been my great professional pleasure and privilege to have come to know a much wider circle of NAIS schools in my 2+ years at EE Ford than had been the case in my years of previous experience working at four schools that were all quite similar. I have visited over 150 schools in 40 states. I've met with many dedicated teachers and administrators who make me very proud to be a part of this professional world. This Foundation cares deeply about the good and important work that you do. I look forward to continuing to do my best to maintain the high standards of my predecessors and to assist the EE Ford Foundation as it continues its long history of support for independent schools.

I hope that if you have any questions about any of what you have read in this memo, you won't hesitate to be in touch with me. I wish you all the best as you begin the 2015-16 school year.

With kind regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,



John C. Gulla
Executive Director