Effective Heads of School
By Dane L. Peters, Headmaster, Mooreland Hill School, Kensington, Connecticut

As a requirement of the 1995 Klingenstein Visiting Heads Program, heads of schools were asked to synthesize the thoughts of fourteen year-long Klingenstein Fellow teachers and administrators. The year-long fellows expressed the qualities of an effective head of school. Here are some of their thoughts.

* Many fellows listed being a good listener as a high priority.

* A love of children, working in their best interest and a "fearless regard for students" were prevalent. (Human and personal qualities were high on most lists.)

* The word trust appeared many times. It is clear that teachers want to trust their heads.

* A head must be able to articulate the vision and the mission of the school to all members of the school and surrounding communities.

* Heads must take care of people's needs: be accessible, offer empowerment through consensus, make teachers feel valued, let them know how they are doing.

* Working on the quality of the school and advocating professional development through conferences, classroom observations, graduate work and sabbaticals are important to many fellows.

* Heads must be able to communicate well to all constituencies of the school and surrounding communities.

* Having knowledge of education and academic disciplines is important. Many fellows suggested that it is good when the head teaches a class.

* The head must be a good manager and follow through on tasks initiated. This is especially true as it relates to the delegation of responsibility, school finances, board matters, faculty issues and hiring personnel. It is my sense that fellows listed trustee responsibilities as necessary but of a lower priority.

Conveying these qualities through modeling was important to a majority of fellows. It is interesting to note the tone of individual papers; some looked for qualities of firmness with a responsiveness to the concerns for others, while others looked for qualities of warmth and sensitiveness with decisiveness.

(Editors ' Note: With so much emphasis on the head's relationship with the Board in recent issues of THL, it is interesting to be reminded of the views of the faculty on effective leadership.)

---------------------------------
Author: Dane L. Peters, Headmaster, Mooreland Hill School, Kensington, Connecticut; published in THL and reprinted with permission, Spring '95 ISACS UPDATE Newsletter Insert.