

SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH....

JOHN LEWIS, HEAD OF SCHOOL AT THE GUNSTON SCHOOL AND AIMS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Tell us how you first got involved in with AIMS?

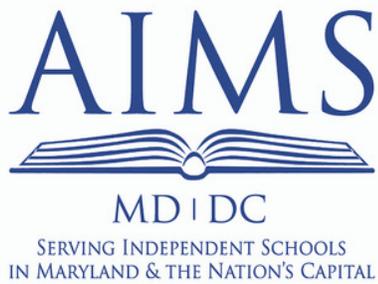
My significant involvement with AIMS began when I was invited to serve as a member of the AIMS Accreditation Committee. I served on this committee for five years, chairing it for three, and it is difficult to overstate how valuable this experience was for me as a recently appointed Head. Not only was I able to understand how my own school fit into the wider school landscape, but it was also an opportunity to reflect on major institutional questions on a regular basis.

What's your first memory of being a Head of School?

My second day as a Head, I spotted a campus facilities issue that needed to be addressed. My initial thought was: "Who is responsible for making this a top priority!?" After a few minutes of reflection, I came to the disorienting conclusion that the answer was: Me. It was like realizing that the jet I was flying wasn't a flight simulator, but an actual aircraft I could crash into the ground.

What has surprised you most about working with schools and or students?

In my travels to different schools, I am always struck by the power and diversity of each school's institutional culture. It's a force as strong as gravity.



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What do you find most challenging about independent education?

Our schools are guided by remarkably ambitious and inspiring missions. No matter how hard we work, these high and worthy institutional aspirations, counterposed by the real-life challenges of school life, make it hard to ever feel satisfied that our school is fulfilling its mission to a maximum extent.

What do you wish other people knew about AIMS?

For those who don't know it already, AIMS effectively brings together a remarkable diversity of schools, educators, and ideas. The geographical density of schools within our association makes AIMS unique in its ability to connect like-minded professionals to engage with important issues.

Tell us about someone who has influenced your work?

Former NAIS President Patrick Bassett has always inspired me, and he had a knack for framing institutional leadership challenges in a compelling and useful way. At the NAIS New Heads conference, he once said, "When you're a Head of School, people are frequently walking into your office with a proverbial monkey on their back, wanting you to solve their problem for them. If that monkey isn't yours, don't take the monkey!"

If you weren't serving at AIMS, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?

If my initial life plan had worked out, I would have recently finished my Hall of Fame baseball career with my beloved home team, the Baltimore Orioles, and I would now be in the play-by-play booth with Jim Palmer. Alas, I'll need to stick with Plan B.