

The Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, or BILLD, provides annual training on leadership and professional development for newer state legislators from the Midwest. This page appears every month in Stateline Midwest. It provides updates on alumni of the program, as well as information related to the BILLD program, leadership development and legislative leadership.

Creating a culture of excellence and civility

Good governance. Public trust. Civility.

How can state legislatures and their leaders reach positive outcomes like these? At the The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University, where I serve as executive director, we believe the answers begin with a commitment to ethical leadership and character development.

That is because an intentional focus on fostering and demonstrating character-based leadership competencies can lead to excellence — and excellence with integrity — in the public arena.

Our research with the Excellence with Integrity Institute asserts that excellence comes from personal habits and individual mindsets, which are formed from an organizational culture shaped and built by leaders. In short, leadership shapes culture, which influences character, which leads to optimal performance. In public service, several leadership competencies, when demonstrated with intentionality, result in a positive culture and optimal performance — in self and others. Good outcomes will follow.

1 Intentional relationship building

Leadership is based on relationships. The challenge in our fast-paced society is to take the time to intentionally build relationships. It is more challenging to move from surface-level relationships to substantive relationships with others, especially those who hold different viewpoints and perspectives than our own. Thus, leaders must have the courage and curiosity to build relationships, especially with those who are new and different.

2 Shared ground rules for engagement

When working with others, it is important to establish shared ground rules for engagement. Begin by identifying what it will take to do the best work and treat each other with care and respect as you work together. When intentional norms and processes for working together have been defined and agreed upon in advance, the outcomes for success are significantly enhanced.

3 Character-based leadership

Leadership skills are enhanced when we reflect and build on our strengths and areas of improvement in our core competencies. Research shows us that a synergy of moral character and performance character is necessary for optimal performance. “Performance character competencies” include perseverance, work ethic, positive attitude, initiative and creativity. These habits and traits enable us to do our best work and achieve our goals. “Moral character” competencies include caring, courage, respect and responsibility. These traits ensure that we achieve our goals in ethical, fair and harmonious ways.

Guest Author: J. Scott Raecker

J. Scott Raecker is executive director of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University. He was a state representative in Iowa from 1999-2012; his leadership positions included serving as chair of the House Appropriations Committee and Ethics Committee. Scott is also on the faculty of BILLD.



4 Integrity

Excellence, optimal performance and public trust are rooted in the concept of integrity. Integrity (*integras*) speaks to the wholeness needed to lead effectively, such as honoring our word (including commitments to ourselves) and communicating with others promptly when we are unable to fulfill our commitments. Integrity also includes the quality and consistency of systems and organizations. When individuals and systems are “out of integrity,” it negatively impacts performance, reliability and workability.

5 Clear communication

Thinking through the “who, what, where, when and how” leads to positive outcomes. In addition, clear communication begins with clarity regarding what we want to achieve, and avoid, as outcomes of our communication. And it is essential to seek to understand as well as to be understood.

6 Assessment of process

Optimal performance in organizational structure and processes requires periodic organizational assessments. Implement an intentional practice with colleagues to audit which systems and processes should be stopped, started, continued and improved.

7 The ‘CHAMP’ operating system

The operating system for optimal performance is captured in the acronym CHAMP. Great leaders shape character through: **C**larity of expectations, pro-active **H**abits, **A**ccountability of self and others, and a positive **M**indset, which leads to optimal **P**erformance. When one of these elements is weak, or missing altogether, the expected performance outcome will not be achieved.



BILLD Alumni Notes: Midwest's leaders on education policy

Prior to being elected to the Ohio House, **Rep. John Patterson** (BILLD class of 2009) taught U.S. history for 29 years. His dedication to K-12 education has continued as a legislator. The Ohio Democrat is co-chair of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education.



Along with his Republican co-chair, Rep. Bob Cupp (a longtime BILLD faculty member), Patterson led a comprehensive study of school funding in Ohio. Their study group released a Fair School Funding Plan earlier this year. The group's plan, the two lawmakers say, “is fair, rational and justifiable, in contrast to our current system that is often unfair and nearly always incomprehensible.”

The proposal remains under consideration.

Here is a list of other BILLD alumni who hold leadership positions on K-12 education policy committees in their respective state legislatures.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- Indiana **Rep. Bob Behning**, class of 1995
- Indiana **Sen. Jeff Raatz**, class of 2016
- Iowa **Sen. Amy Sinclair**, class of 2016
- Minnesota **Sen. Carla Nelson**, class of 2003
- North Dakota **Rep. Mark Owens**, class of 2006
- North Dakota **Sen. Don Schaible**, class of 2012
- Ohio **Sen. Peggy Lehner**, class of 2010
- Wisconsin **Sen. Luther Olsen**, class of 1996

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRS

- Kansas **Rep. Brenda Dietrich**, class of 2018
- Michigan **Sen. Ken Horn**, class of 2007
- Nebraska **Sen. Lynne Walz**, class of 2019
- North Dakota **Rep. Cindy Schreiber-Beck**, class of 2015
- Wisconsin **Sen. Alberta Darling**, class of 1995

RANKING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Indiana **Sen. Eddie Melton**, class of 2018
- Iowa **Rep. Ras Smith**, class of 2018
- Kansas **Sen. Dinah Sykes**, class of 2017

MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

- Manitoba **Minister Kelvin Goertzen**, class of 2008
- Saskatchewan **Minister Gordon Wyant**, class of 2011

Please submit Alumni News to Laura Tomaka, CSG Midwest program manager for BILLD. She can be reached at ltomaka@cs.org.

News from CSG Midwest's BILLD Program

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IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING LEGISLATIVE STRESS: SCIENCE-BASED TIPS FROM A FORMER LAWMAKER

I vividly remember the legislative session cycle as starting with high energy and focus. The demands of balancing family, work and public service brought a full complement of stress — and yet, it seemed manageable.

By the end of the session, I was tired and weary, and the motivating factors of good stress moved past a tipping point and took me to distress. I was not at my best. My energy tank was empty.

In the legislature, I saw evidence of the destructive force of distress, which erodes energy and enthusiasm, saps patience and civility, and undermines optimal performance.

I wish I would have known then what I know now about the new science of stress.

Stress is real. And the research around stress indicates that “good stress” can improve focus, motivation and endurance, creating optimal performance. Distress, though, leads to mental, physical and emotional lapses that negatively impact performance.

How you think about stress (your mindset) and how you respond to stress (your actions) make a difference. In her research, Stanford University's Dr. Kelly McGonigal asserts that how you understand stress makes all the difference in how you respond to it. And when you change your mind about stress, you change your body's response.

My colleague Dr. Matt Davidson, president of the Excellence with Integrity Institute, has spent 25 years developing research-based strategies for individual and organizational success, including in-depth work around stress management.

The following are some essential strategies drawn from our applied work together.



BE AWARE, THEN SHARE WITH A PERSON OF TRUST

Look for patterns that indicate signs of high stress, including irritability, headaches, low energy, misuse of food and alcohol, and an overall sense of dragging yourself through the day. It's easier to monitor yourself when the topic is open for discussion amongst your colleagues. So, break the silence and share what you are going through with a person of trust.



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PREPARE FOR HANDLING HIGH-STRESS MOMENTS

Responses are the actions you take, both proactive and reactive. Proactive responses are done in preparation of high-stress moments: adequate sleep, hydration, nutrition, exercise and down time, for example. Reactive responses take place in moments of high stress, when you need to take a moment for quick introspection on what you are going to say or do next. A quick walk outside or a moment alone to concentrate on your thoughts with intentional breathing can minimize negative responses to stress.



VIEW MISTAKES, CHALLENGES AS A CHANCE TO GROW

A major contributor to stress is your mindset and how you approach your public service and life. Science is also clear here: A growth mindset is beneficial in managing stress. Understanding that mistakes and challenges are opportunities to learn and grow is essential to managing stress. Learn to let go of the things that are sapping your energy and negatively impacting your optimal performance. Your stressors may not change, but how you approach them can. As renowned psychologist Viktor Frankl once said, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."