

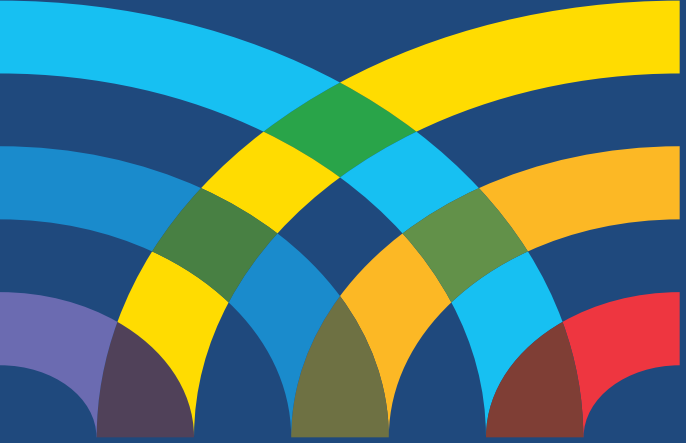
# Leadership for Creativity: From the Classroom to the Boardroom

**Creative  
Leadership  
Solutions**

**National School Boards Association  
Boston, Massachusetts April 10, 2016**

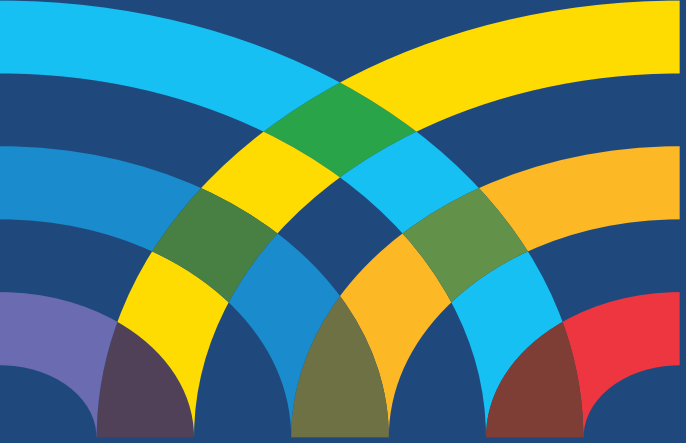
**Douglas Reeves, PhD  
Douglas.Reeves@CreativeLeadership.net  
@DouglasReeves  
(781) 710-9633**

**Presentation and resources available at  
CreativeLeadership.net**



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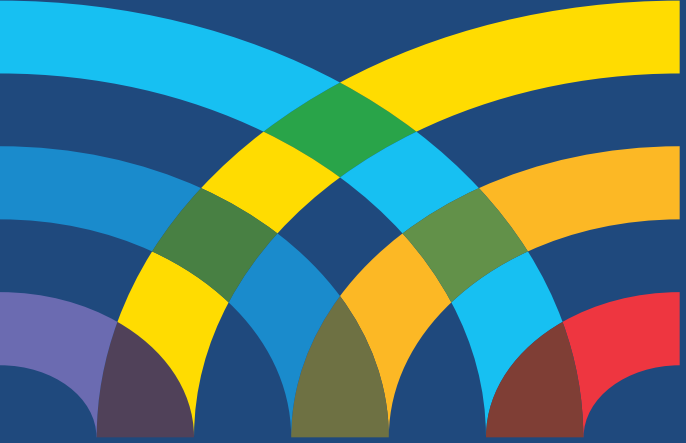
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## **Creative Leadership Solutions**

# Overview

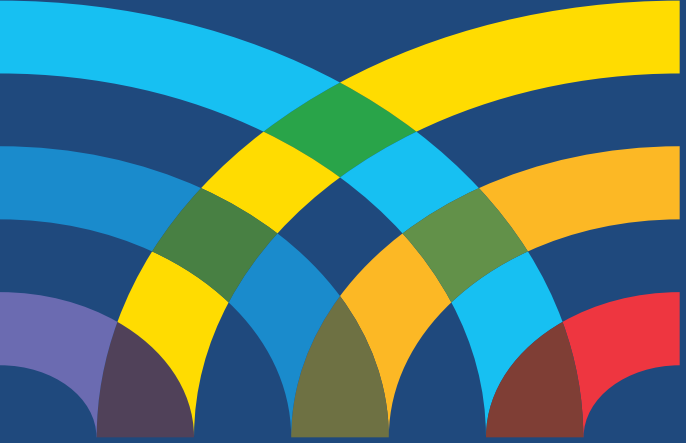
- **Prevailing Hypotheses About Creativity**
- **Unhelpful Advice About Creativity**
- **Rhetoric-Reality Gap**
- **Assessing Creative Environments**
- **Encouraging Creativity from the Classroom to the Boardroom**
- **Practical Application for Schools**



# Some Hypotheses About Creativity

## Creative Leadership Solutions

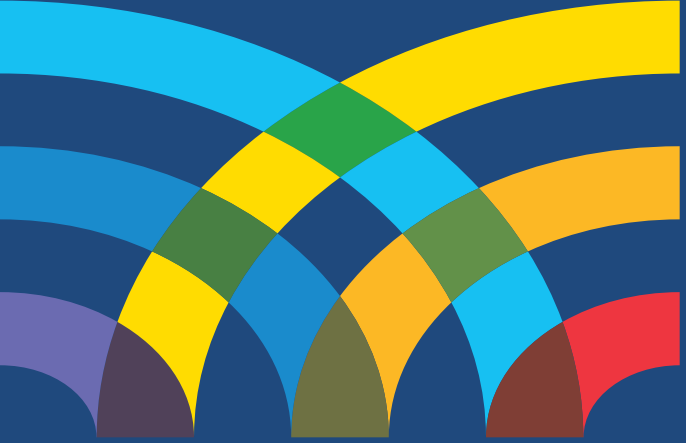
- *Creative kids need to be left alone*
- *Creativity begins with brainstorming*
- *Creativity depends upon inspiration and schools should get out of the way*
- *Evaluation, assessment, and criticism kill creativity*
- *Schools celebrate creative kids*
- *Creative recommendations come to the board through carefully filtered staff recommendations*
- Other hypotheses?



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# Unhelpful Advice About Creativity

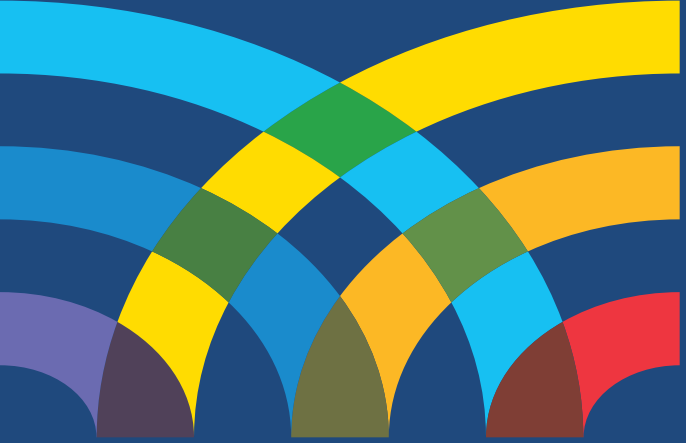
- Think outside the box!
- Let children discover and explore . And watch miracles happen!
- Schools stifle creativity because they are too judgmental and evaluative
- Standards are the culprit!
- Creativity is original; innovative is derivative.



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# One Working Definition of *Creativity*

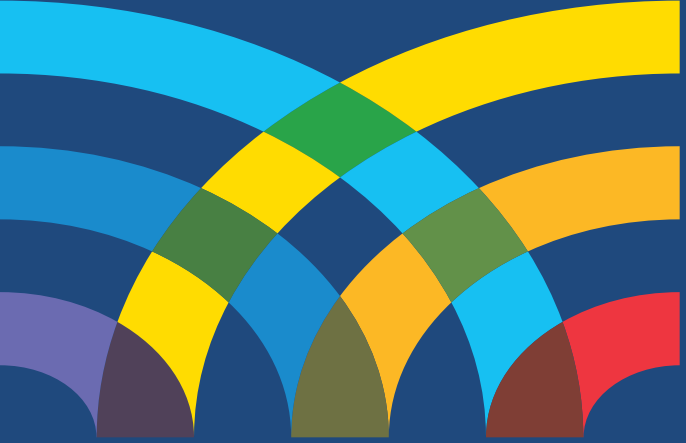
- The process of **experimentation, evaluation, and follow through**, which leads to a significant **discovery, insight, or contribution**
- Note what it doesn't say: *original, novel, superstar ...*



# Fundamental Research Findings

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- **Creativity is essential for society and the planet**
- **Creativity is valued by businesses, schools, and governments**
- **Unfortunately, . . .**

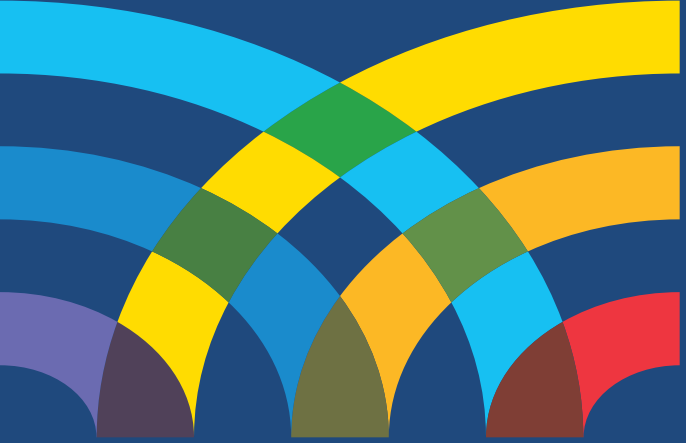


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# Enormous Gap Between Intentions and Reality

- **Student grading systems deliberately undermine the essentials of creativity: trial, error, feedback, and improvement.**
- **The “average” punishes every experimental error.**

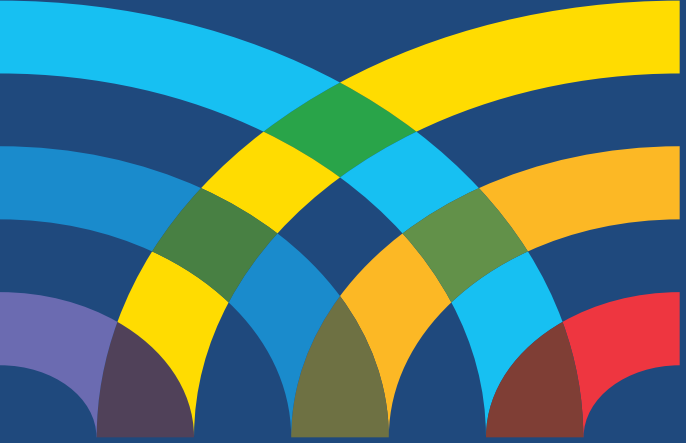




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# **Diminishing Teacher Creativity**

**Teacher evaluation systems undermine experimental approaches to teaching, learning, and engagement because they punish failure. When every observation “counts,” no teacher will try a creative new idea in the classroom.**

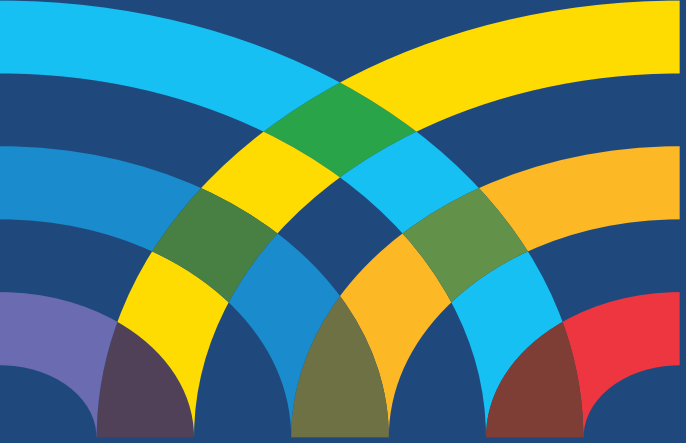


# Creativity Is Systematically Devalued

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**The most creative students were the least popular with students and teachers; the least creative students were the most popular.**

(Research results from Union College and Skidmore College study of Albany, NY elementary school teachers, 2012)

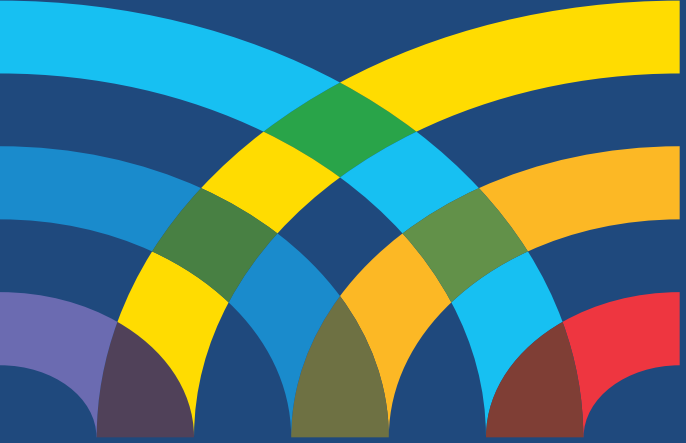


# Creative Students are Unpopular

Adam Grant, 2016:

*The most creative children are least likely to become the teacher's pet . . . The least creative students keep their creative ideas to themselves and become "the most excellent sheep."*

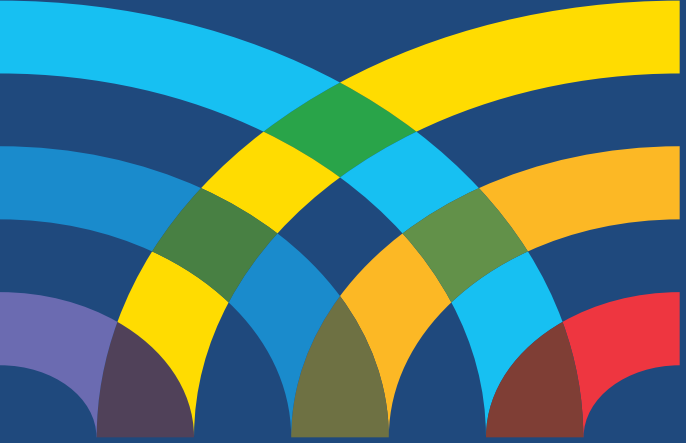
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## More Bad News

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- **CEO's who claim to value creativity when hiring people have incentive programs that punish risk and error – the essential element of creative endeavor.**



# Creativity Is Declining for Students

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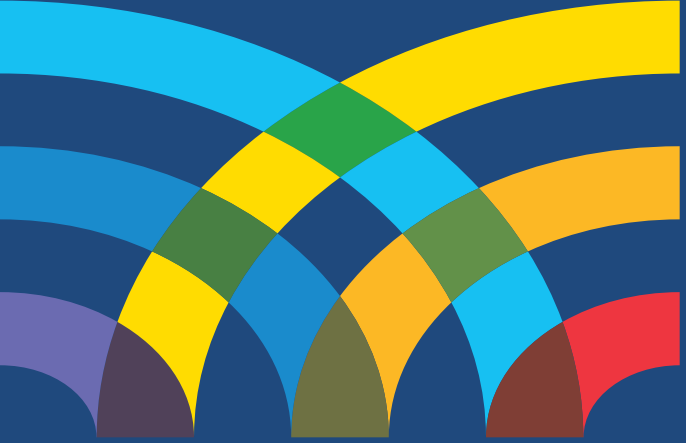
- Creativity among students has declined significantly in the past 20 years.
- The biggest decline is in “creative elaboration” – the ability to develop and elaborate on ideas with detailed and reflective thinking.

(Kyung Hee Kim, College of William and Mary, after analysis of nearly 300,000 American adults and children based on the Torrance Tests of Creating Thinking (TTCT), October 2010.)

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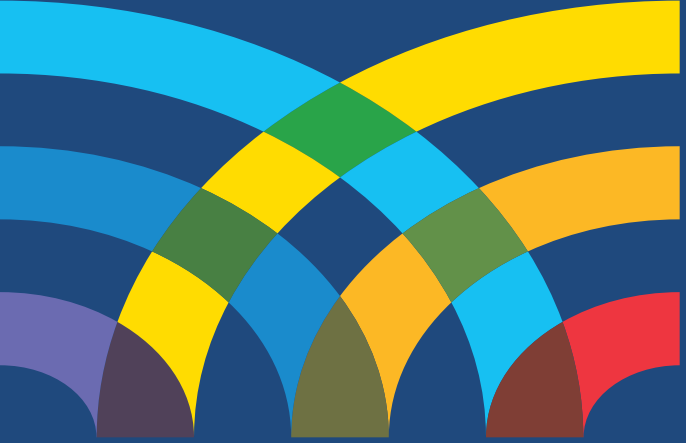
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# New Research on Classroom Creativity

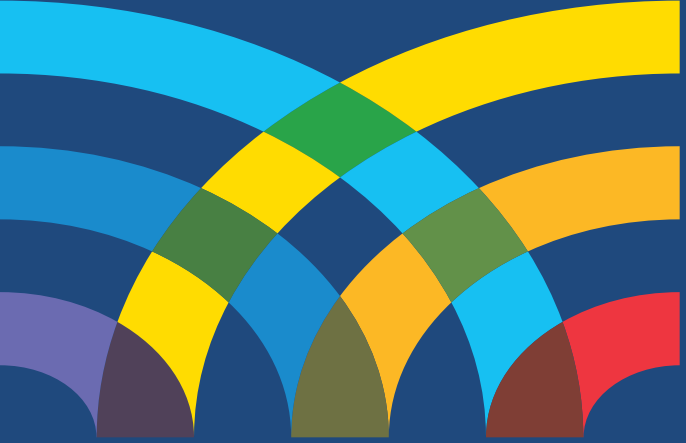
- **100+ creativity assessments, including K–12 and college, evaluated on 8-dimension scale**
- **>95% inter-rater reliability**



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# Dimensions of Creativity Assessment

- **Research basis**
- **Multidisciplinary perspective**
- **Source material**
- **Clarity of guidelines**
- **Product and Process**
- **Collaboration**
- **Practice and error**

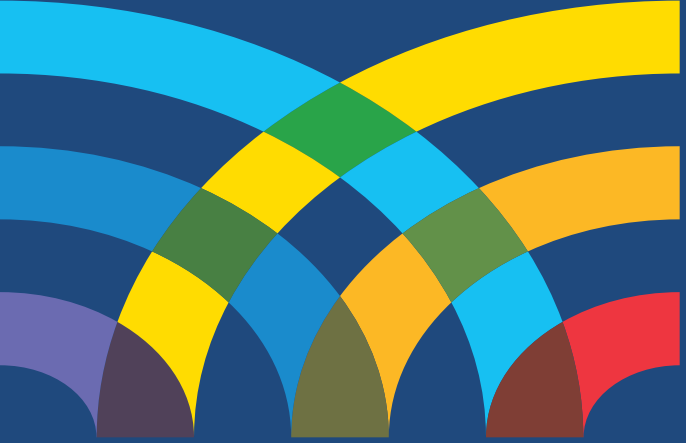


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# How the Research Was Conducted

- Each classroom activity/assessment was evaluated on four-point scale:
  - Exemplary
  - Proficient
  - Progressing
  - Not Meeting Standards
- To apply this in your own schools, use the free meta-assessment at [CreativeLeadership.net](http://CreativeLeadership.net)

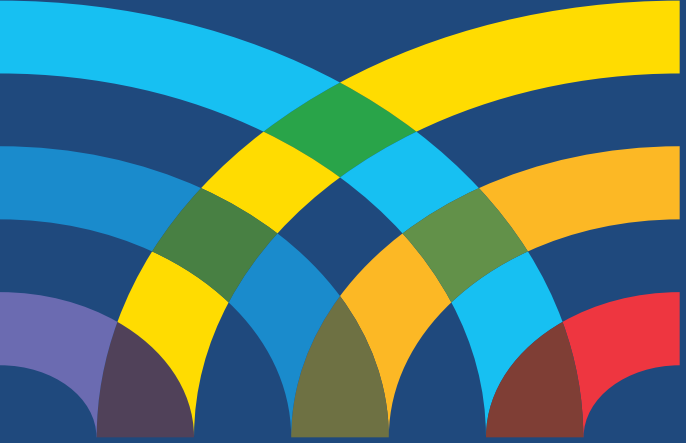




# Dimensions of Creativity Assessment – % Proficient +

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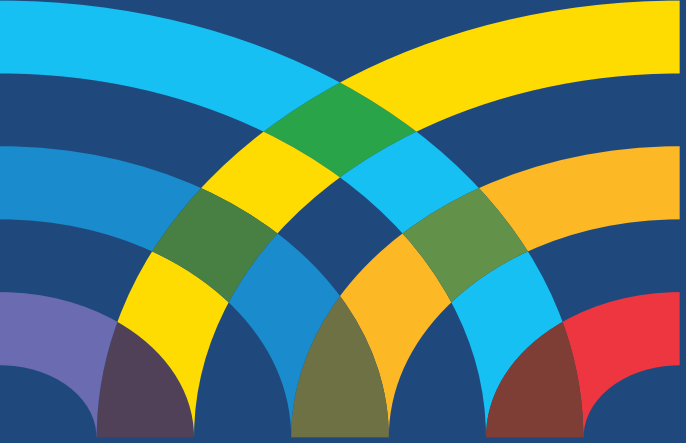
- **Research basis – 42%**
- **Multidisciplinary perspective – 49%**
- **Source material – 34%**
- **Clarity of guidelines – 52%**
- **Product – 17%**
- **Process – 41%**
- **Collaboration – 9%**
- **Practice and error – 20%**



## Creative Leadership Solutions

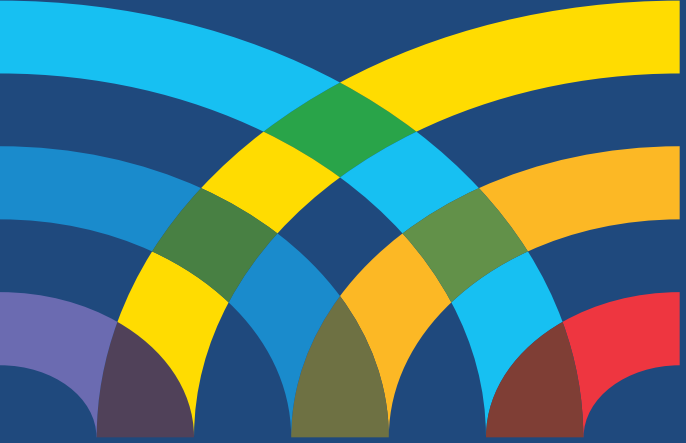
# Dimensions of Creativity Assessment – Exemplary

- **Research basis – 0%**
- **Multidisciplinary perspective – 9%**
- **Source material – 2%**
- **Clarity of guidelines – 3%**
- **Product – 8%**
- **Process – 3%**
- **Collaboration – 0%**
- **Practice and error – 0%**



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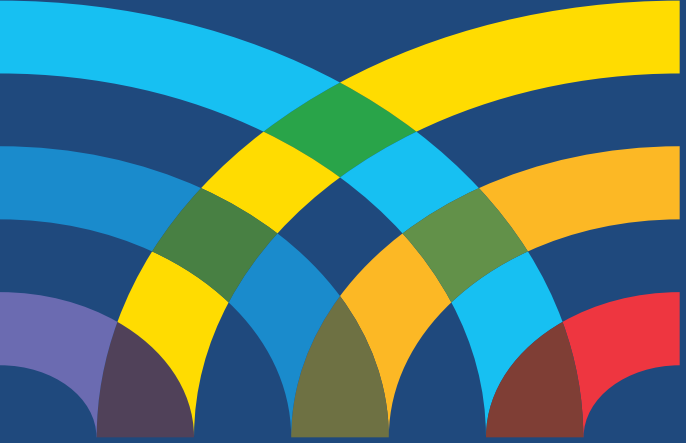
# **Practical Guidelines for School Leaders**



# Time for Assessment and *Collaborative* Scoring

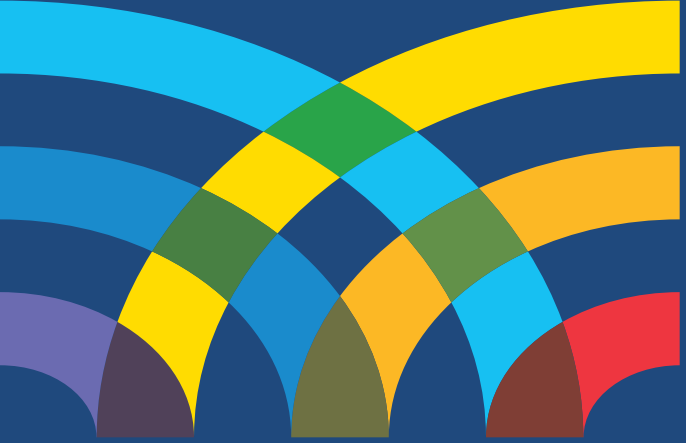
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This means sacrificing  
“delivery” of content  
as the primary  
consumer of time



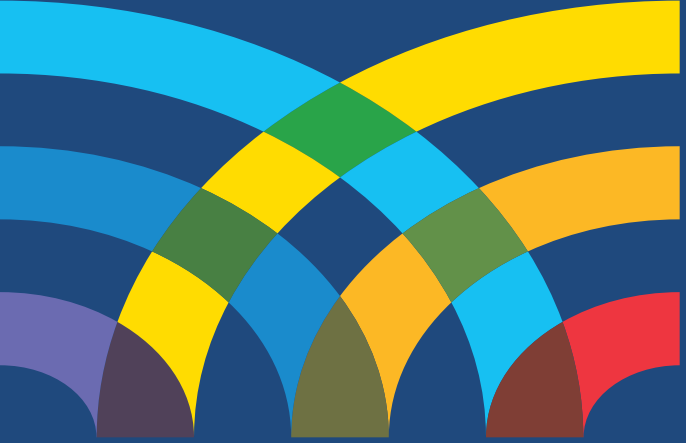
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# **Decision Discipline – Mutually Exclusive Alternatives**



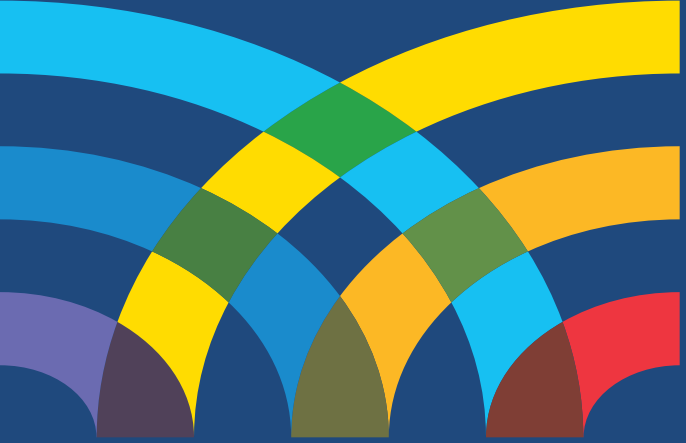
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# **Ban the Average – for Students, Teachers and Administrators**



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**Encourage Risk –  
“Evaluation-Free  
Zones” for 50% of  
Observations**

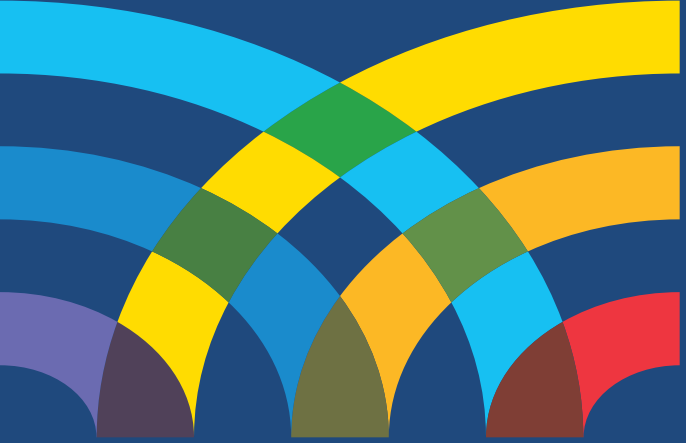


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# How do we punish curiosity and creativity?

- **What student behavior is most consistently rewarded?**
- **Describe the student who is not quite academically proficient, but who nevertheless receives good grades**





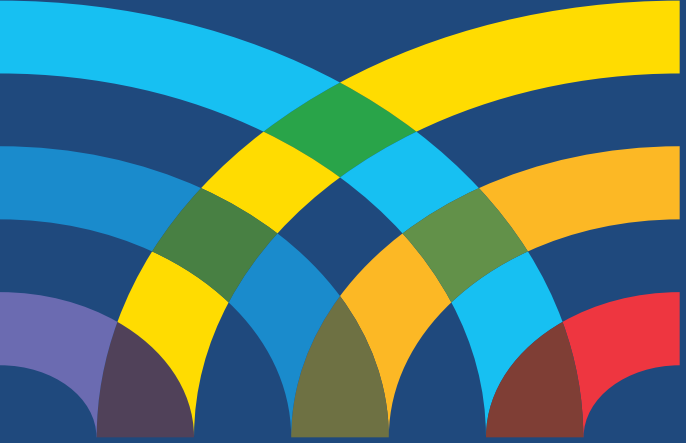
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**The “good girl” effect—we  
effectively undermine the  
creativity of half the planet.**

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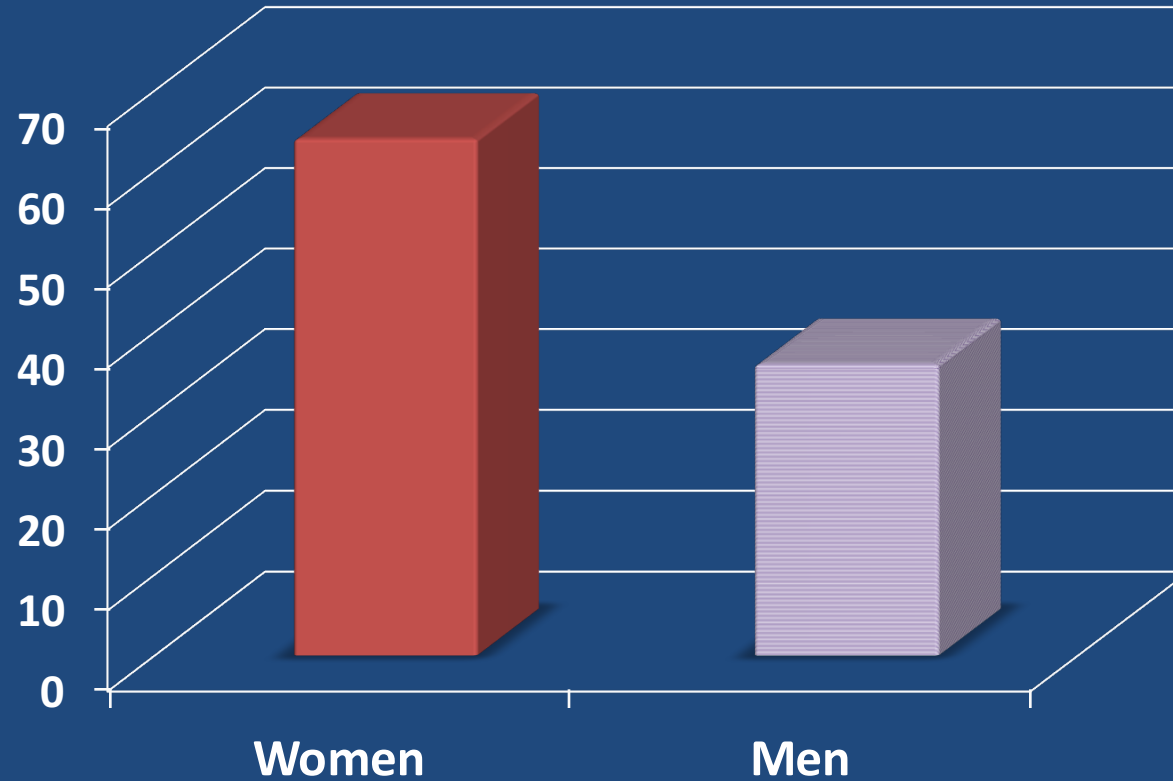
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# The “Good Girl” Effect – National Honor Society Membership

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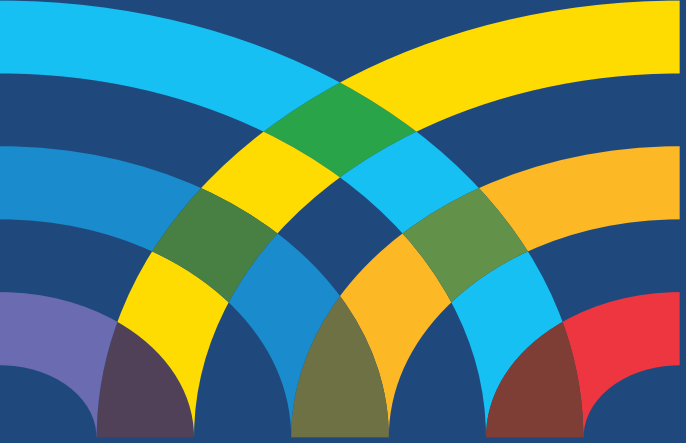


Kristof, “The Boys Have Fallen Behind,”  
*New York Times*, March 27, 2010)

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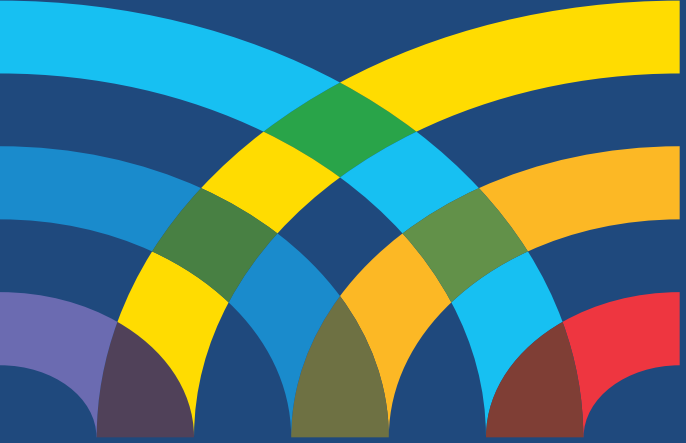


# Interviews With Successful Girls and Women

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*“There were many times I knew that a colleague was wrong, but I didn’t speak up because it was inappropriate to challenge someone else.”*

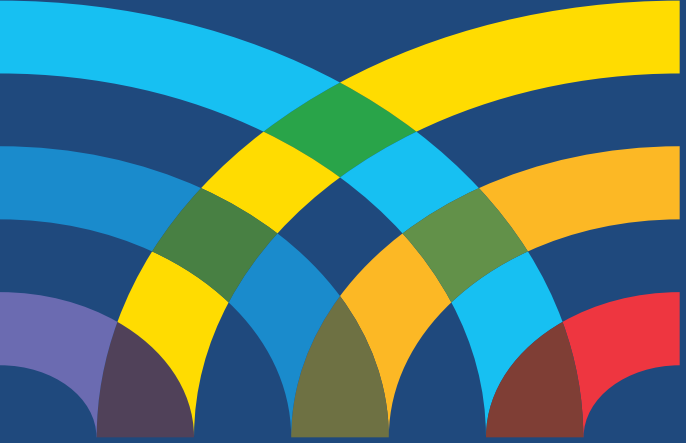
—Helen, an Ivy League graduate  
(Reeves & Reeves, *The Myth of the Muse*  
(Solution Tree, 2016))



## Creative Leadership Solutions

*“The playground hasn’t been updated for six years and some of it is dangerous. I’d like to write a story for the school newspaper, but I don’t want to criticize the teachers or school leaders.”*

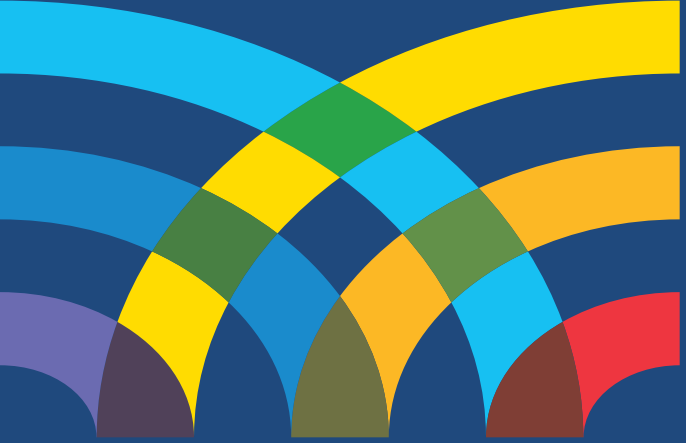
—Jessica, an exceptional student  
(Reeves & Reeves, *The Seven Virtues of Creativity*  
(Solution Tree, 2015))



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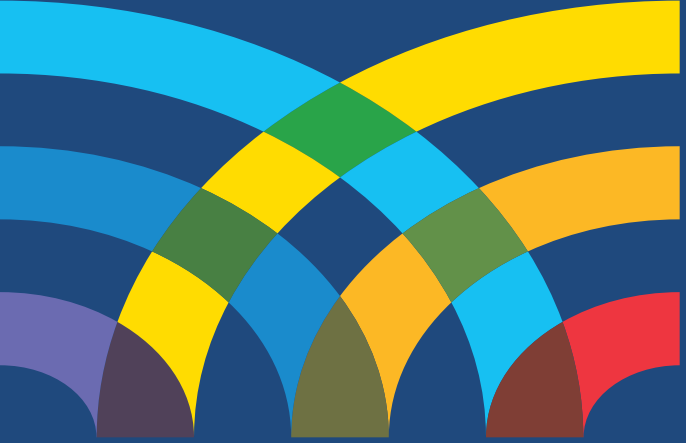
*“Being a good girl got me good grades in high school and college, but when I went to an elite MBA program as one of two women in the class, it took more than a semester for me to have elbows as sharp as the guys.”*

(Reeves & Reeves, *The Myth of the Muse*  
(Solution Tree, 2016)



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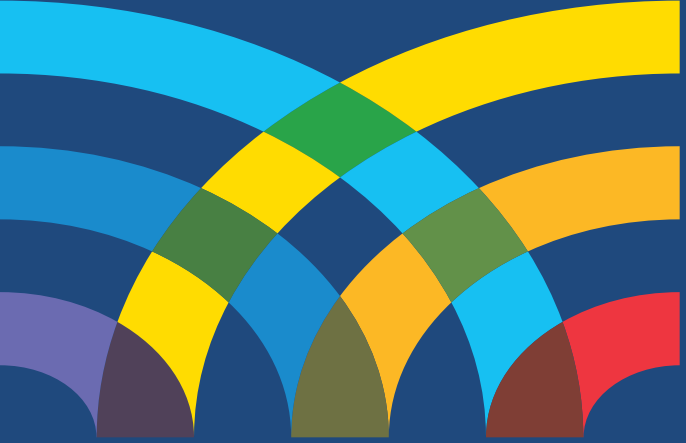
**There is no  
contradiction between  
creativity and  
academic discipline.  
In fact, disciplinary knowledge is  
essential for creativity.**



## Creative Leadership Solutions

**“Creation is unlikely to emerge in the absence of some disciplinary mastery and, perhaps, some capacity to synthesize; it's not possible to think outside the box unless you have a box.”**

—Howard Gardner,  
*Five Minds for the Future,*

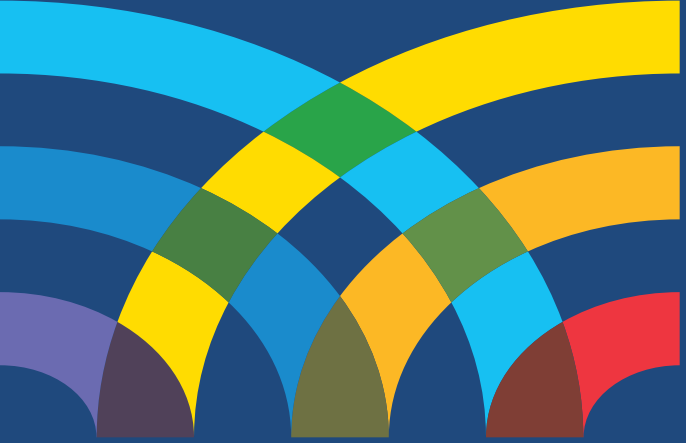


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# **Some Practical Steps for Creative Collaboration**

- **Require and assess collaborative effort**
- **Challenge the illusion of collaboration in the classroom**

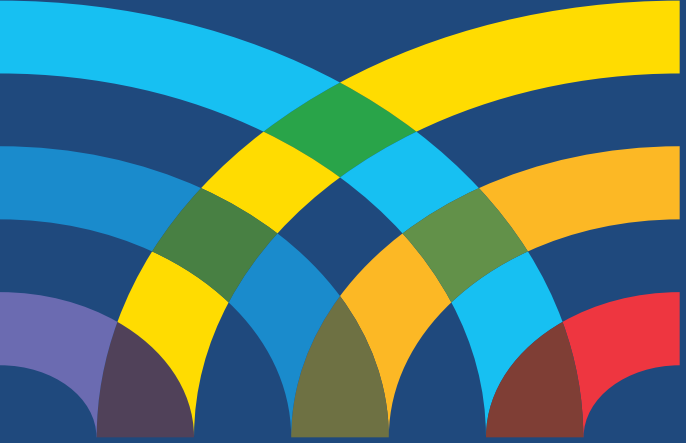




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# Creativity in the Boardroom

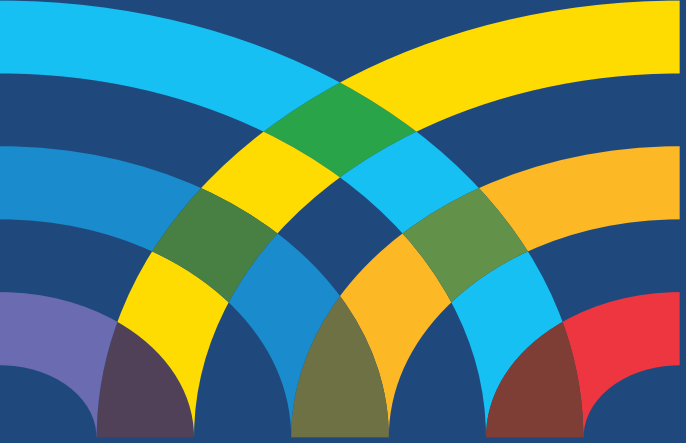
- How has your governing board agenda changed in the past 20 years?
- What is the ratio of board- and cabinet-level time from presentations to deliberation?
- What happened to the last public failure?



## Creative Leadership Solutions

# Encouraging Creative Tenacity

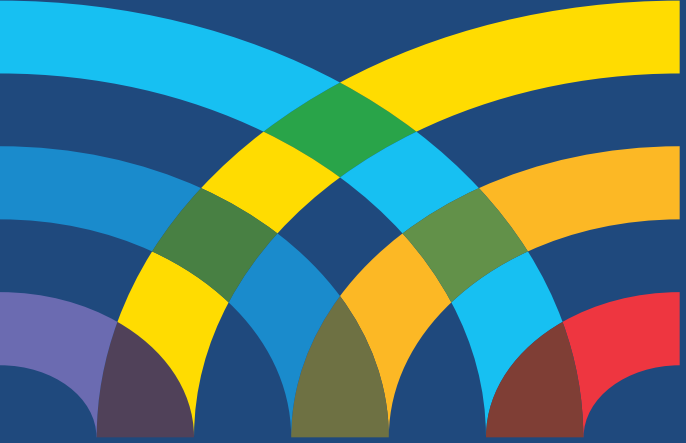
- Culture of multiple attempts
- Constructive contention, debate, and dissent
- Ban the use of the average
- Celebrate the right kind of failure



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# How We Discourage Creativity Among Teachers

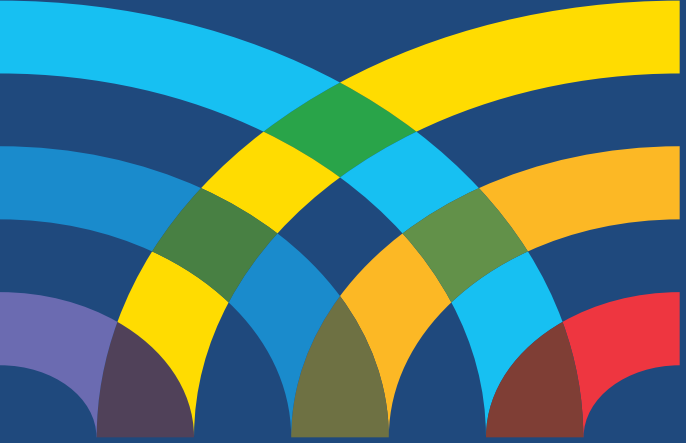
- Discourage taking risks and failure
- Punish feedback and dissent
- Use the “average” in multiple teacher observations



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# How We Discourage Creativity Among Leaders

- **Annual (or end of contract) performance reviews**
- **Strategic plans that elevate execution over creativity**
- **Micromanagement**
- **Unclear job descriptions**



## **Creative Leadership Solutions**

# **How We Discourage Creativity Among Policy Makers and Board Members**

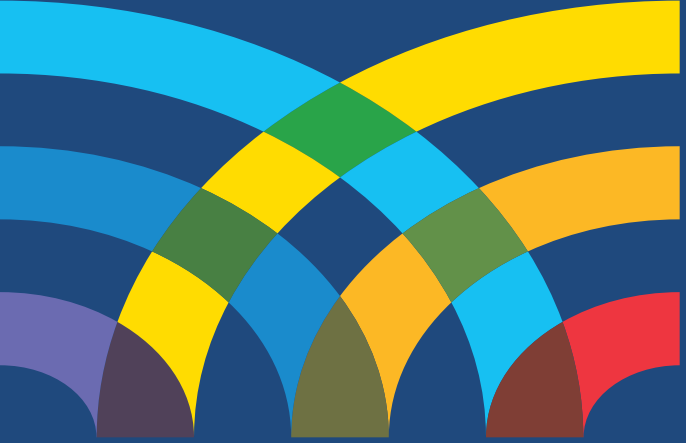
- **Standardized agendas**
- **One administrative recommendation submitted for up-or-down votes**
- **A culture of congeniality over discussion and debate**



# Creativity in the Boardroom

## Creative Leadership Solutions

- Collegiality, not just congeniality
- Mutually exclusive decision alternatives
- Public discussion and praise for learning mistakes
- Integrating creativity into educational accountability systems



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***You cannot expect critical thinking in the classroom or faculty room if there is not critical thinking in the board room.***



# Reconsidering the Creativity Hypotheses

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- **Creative kids need collaboration**
- **Creativity begins with debate, dissent, and evaluation**
- **Creativity depends upon deliberate environments of hard work and multiple attempts**
- **Evaluation, assessment, and criticism nurture creativity**
- **Schools celebrate the creativity environment – not just the result**

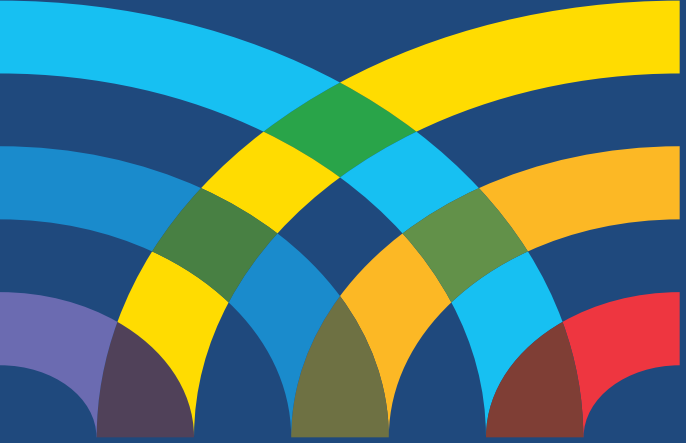




# Integrating Creativity Into Educational Accountability

## Creative Leadership Solutions

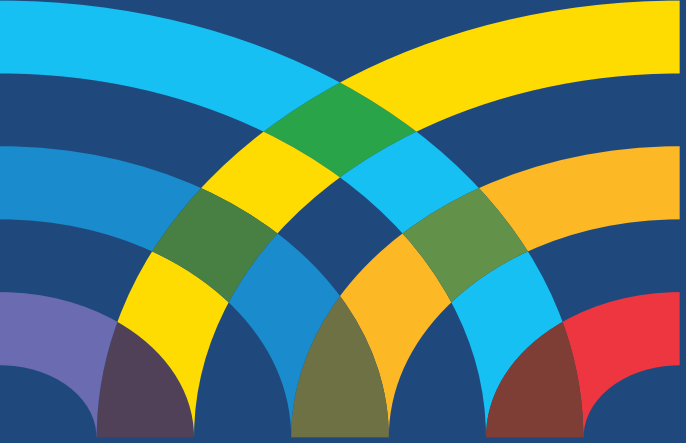
- Do our practices match our mission and vision?
- Do classroom assessments and practices nurture or discourage creative habits?
- Do assessments of teachers and administrators nurture or discourage creativity habits?



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# **Risks and Rewards of Encouraging Creativity**

**Type I Error  
Type II Error**



# Discussion and Questions

For a complete set of creativity  
resources, please email:

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**Douglas Reeves**

**Douglas.Reeves@CreativeLeadership.net**

**@DouglasReeves**

**(781) 710-9633**