

# APEX

*Program for School Leadership*



**GreatHearts®**

2025



Welcome!

The APEX Program for School Leadership is a series of short courses designed for developing leaders of classical education. The program provides targeted, continuing education pertaining to school culture, instructional and operational excellence, and a classical philosophy of leadership. Rooted in centuries of classical wisdom and decades of practical experience, APEX is a program designed to cultivate the prudence you need to lead a virtue-centered learning community.

We invite you to read more about our unique course offerings in this catalogue. Please note that our courses are offered on a revolving basis during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. More information on enrollment can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions about the program, our offerings, or wish to discuss your unique career path, please contact us at [PD@greatheartsamerica.org](mailto:PD@greatheartsamerica.org).

In partnership,  
The Great Hearts Professional Development Team



## Table of Contents

Personal Leadership I .....	4
Personal Leadership II .....	5
Building a Strong Faculty Culture .....	6
Building a Strong Student Culture .....	7
Building Healthy Parent Communities .....	8
Hiring for Mission Fit .....	9
Operationalizing Vision .....	10
Case Study in School Leadership .....	11
Leadership for Change: Understanding Change, Managing Transitions .....	12
Instructional Coaching Principles & Practices .....	13
Leadership & Liberal Education .....	14
Lives of Leaders: Thomas More .....	15
Lives of Leaders: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ....	16
Lives of Leaders: Xenophon .....	17

## Personal Leadership I

This course builds upon the wisdom of the three Delphic maxims inscribed in the Temple of Apollo: “know thyself,” “nothing in excess,” and “certainty brings ruin.” It combines classical models of leadership with modern management practices. Its anchor, however, remains the medium of tragedy, the realm of truth and self-discovery par excellence. The lyric voice will also feature prominently, as the “star to every wand’ring bark,” as Shakespeare writes in Sonnet 116.

This course encourages self-reflection about such topics as leadership style and bringing the best in those whom one serves. It seeks to reveal the contours of leadership (rather than details) so as to engender an understanding of leadership as an art in the sense of the ancient Greek word *techne*. It does not focus on operationalizing one’s vision in a school. This course contains synchronous elements and requires a personal mentor.

Please note that some assignments in this course require the learner to consult with a mentor. The mentor can be another teacher at your school who has been helping you grow in your role (coach or master teacher), your headmaster or school principal, or a supervisor.

### Texts:

- Cowan, Donald. *Classic Texts and the Nature of Authority*, Dallas Institute Publications, 1993. ISBN: 978-0911005233
- De Pree, Max. *Leadership is an Art*, Doubleday. 2004. ISBN: 978-0385512466



*The Infant Oedipus Revived by the Shepherd Phorbas*,  
Antoine Denis Chaudet

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### Pathways



### Competency



## Personal Leadership II

Building on Personal Leadership I, Personal Leadership II centers on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, particularly the character of Prospero, to cement your understanding of who a classical leader is and what his or her work means in the context of education. The readings and assignments promote a sustained intellectual engagement with Shakespeare’s vision, as well as self-reflection on your strengths and areas of growth.

Each module takes you through parts of the play, supplemented by readings that enhance the play’s meaning. Moreover, you will be asked to read and write on various lyric voices that complement Shakespeare’s insights.

### Text:

- Donald Cowan’s “The Perennial Future: Learning with Prospero” in *Unbinding Prometheus: Education for the Coming Age*, Dallas Institute Publications, 1988.



*Print of the Shakespeare memorial  
in Westminster Abbey*

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### Pathways



Teacher-  
Leader



Aspiring  
Tier II  
Leader



Aspiring  
Head of  
School

### Competency



Self-Awareness

## Building a Strong Faculty Culture

The objective of this course is to develop your understanding of the components of a healthy faculty culture so that you can bring that understanding to bear on the practical, day-to-day decision-making processes of school leadership. Drawing on the broad Great Hearts background in leading schools and on wisdom both ancient and modern, this course will develop your theoretical understanding of faculty culture and will provide you with an opportunity to analyze it through a classical lens, whether yours is a district, charter, or private school.



*The School of Athens by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino*

A final disclaimer: this course aims to provide you with opportunities to reflect on key components of faculty culture through a classical lens. It will provide specific principles regarding this. However, it will assume that you are acquainted with the workings of a school and with how to work with faculty generally. The course is not sufficient on its own to fully prepare a Dean, Assistant Headmaster, or other school leaders. For instance, as we look at the topic of candor, we will focus on a philosophical understanding of candor and its importance. Our purpose is not, however, a “how to” guide for instructional coaching. That can be found in a separate course, "Instructional Coaching Principles & Practices."

### Texts:

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, The University of Chicago Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0226026756.
- Pieper, Josef. *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*. Ignatius Press. 2009. ISBN: 978-1586172565
- Pink, Daniel H. *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*. Canongate. 2018. ISBN: 978-1786891709

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### Pathways



### Competency



## Building a Strong Student Culture

The pace of life for a school leader can be frenetic, overwhelming the best of intentions for living a life aligned with virtue. It is hard enough to sort out what is the right next thing when delivering a lesson in a classroom. How do you also consider the right next step on the journey toward moral understanding for your student community as a Whole?

The objective of this course is to develop your ability to integrate a consideration of virtue, and an orientation toward virtue, into the practical, day-

to-day decision-making processes of a school leader. Drawing on the broad Great Hearts background in leading schools and on centuries of wisdom regarding the field of virtue ethics, this course will develop your theoretical understanding of student culture and will provide you with an opportunity to analyze it through the lens of virtue ethics, whether yours is a district, charter, or private school.

A final disclaimer: This course aims to provide you with applied opportunities to reflect on key drivers of student culture through the lens of virtue ethics. It will provide specific principles regarding this. However, it will assume that you are acquainted with the workings of a school and how to work with students generally. The course is not sufficient on its own to fully prepare a Dean, Assistant Headmaster, or other school leaders. For instance, as we look at the topic of student discipline, we will focus on integrating a consideration of virtue ethics principles into that work. We will not, however, provide a full exploration of the topic of student discipline policies and methods.

### Text:

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, The University of Chicago Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0226026756.



*Snap the Whip by Winslow Homer*

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### Pathways



### Competency



## Building Healthy Parent Communities

This course is intended for rising leaders but also includes content likely to be useful to teachers. It will build an awareness of the larger context of parent communities and the elements that create healthy dynamics in three specific dyads: Leader-Parent, Teacher-Parent, and Parent-Parent.

This course is not a complete survey of everything pertaining to parent-academy relations, nor is it intended to train participants in implementing specific strategies for managing difficult relationships. Rather, it seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the role of the parent community as it relates to the work we do and provide frameworks and strategies for developing and nurturing healthy parent communities. This is about the long game. At the same time, participants will find practical – and short term – tools for success as well.



*Akhenaten, Nefertiti and three of their daughters,  
Limestone relief*

### Texts:

- Whitaker, Todd, and Douglas J Fiore. *Dealing with Difficult Parents*. New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.
- Plutarch's "To an Uneducated Leader," an essay from *How to Be a Leader*

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### Pathways



### Competency



Community Leadership



## Hiring for Mission Fit

As Jim Collins famously said in his best-selling leadership book, *Good to Great*, “It is better to first get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats, and then figure out where to drive.” Extraordinary organizations are built by leaders capable of aligning their teams around a common vision, pursued by a diverse team of competent, committed members – and hiring is crucial to that End.



*Miranda-The Tempest, by John William Waterhouse*

This course will highlight one of the critical building blocks of a virtuous faculty culture – hiring for mission fit.

In a school with a focus on virtue ethics, the teachers serve as models to the students, as types of character friends who will always carry the best interests and moral growth of the students firmly in their hearts. Beginning with a section on identifying “first who,” the course will then describe several components in the process of hiring for mission fit, including recruiting, screening, interviewing, and onboarding at the school.

### Texts:

- Lencioni, Patrick. *The Ideal Team Player*. Jossey-Bass, 2016. ISBN: 978-1119209591
- Smart, Geoff and Street, Randy. *Who*. Ballentine Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-0345504197

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## Pathways



## Competency



People Leadership

## Operationalizing Vision

In the classical school, all elements of school life reflect the leader’s vision, including scheduling, recruitment, enrollment, budgeting, and facility management. This course takes current and prospective school leaders through a one-year cycle of operationalizing vision, including delegating strategically. This is by no means a comprehensive treatment of all the operations of a school—some elements are emphasized more heavily than others. However, this course is meant to give you a glimpse into some of the most important daily, monthly, and/or yearly needs of a school, as well as a chance to reflect on the communication needs relative to your current position at your school.



*Starry Night, Vincent van Gogh*

You will engage with ancient and modern voices, such as Shakespeare, Donald Cowan, and Peter Drucker. You will also meet several successful headmasters in the Great Hearts network and read about their unique approaches to the operations of their respective schools at the time of the interviews. The course will culminate in a yearly communications calendar as it relates to your involvement in the school community. You will also present your calendar to your peers and learn about the communication requirements of other positions.

### Texts:

- Cowan, Donald. *Unbinding Prometheus: Education for the Coming Age*. Dallas Institute Publications, 1988.
- Drucker, Peter. *The Effective Executive*. HarperCollins, 2006.

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### Pathways



### Competency



**Leadership Planning  
and Execution**

## Case Study in School Leadership

This course takes participants through specific “on the ground” challenges encountered by real headmasters as they launched the journey of starting a school. At the same time, the course is designed to encourage future school leaders to think about the meaning of education in a specific community. Ultimately, the course seeks to inculcate the vision of a school as a learning community dedicated to excellence in a way that embraces the larger communities of parents and neighborhoods. This is an advanced course recommended for those who have completed at least three APEX modules.



*Plato's Academy (ca. 80 BCE), mosaic from Pompeii*

### Texts:

- Ellet, William. “How to Analyze a Case.” *The Case Study Handbook: How to Read, Discuss, and Write Persuasively About Cases*, Harvard Business School Press, 2007.
- Arthur, James et al. “Digging deeper into character and character education.” *Teaching Character and Virtue in Schools*, Routledge, 2017.

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## Pathways



## Competency



Experience

# Leadership for Change: Understanding Change, Managing Transitions

Intended for any teacher or rising leader, this course seeks to build awareness of the larger context of leading school change and managing transitions. While not exhaustive, it aims to develop an awareness of the process of change and the ways a leader can manager and facilitate change and transitions. This overview includes an introduction to how adults learn and make change and to understanding and managing the progression of transitions, and offers some tools for all leaders to use when implementing or facilitating a change.



*Wassily Kandinsky's Yellow-Red-Blue*

## Text:

- Bridges, William, and Susan Mitchell Bridges. *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. Boston, Ma, Da Capo Lifelong Books, A Member Of The Perseus Books Group, 2016.

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## Pathways



## Competency



Experience

## Instructional Coaching Principles & Practices

This two-part APEX course is focused on both outlining foundation principles of instructional coaching while also dedicating time to the practical work of conducting the observation and feedback process. During the first eight weeks (six sessions), we will ground the learning in several key texts and do a guided practice of the coaching cycle. For this course we will read the complete texts of *Never Underestimate Your Teachers* and *The Coaching Habit*. We will also read Plutarch's essay "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend" and excerpts from *The Art of Coaching* and *Leverage Leadership 2.0*. The second part, lasting eight weeks, will shift gears into a mentorship model- with the facilitators meeting individually with participants to be a thought partner as they do the work of coaching on their campus.



*School Teacher by Jan Steen*

At Great Hearts, we value the short cycle observations as outlined in *Leveraged Leadership* and utilize the Great Hearts Pedagogy - *The Teaching Playbook: The Role and Practice of Our Best Great Hearts Teachers* and its references to *Teach Like A Champion* in order to calibrate excellent teaching throughout the network. We also consider rubrics deployed in each region to help guide us toward excellence.

### Texts:

- Robyn Jackson's *Never Underestimate Your Teachers*
- Michael Bungay Stanier's *The Coaching Habit*

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### Pathways



### Competency



## Leadership & Liberal Education

In this course, we will consider a set of challenges that are unique within – or at least more focal to – a classical or liberal arts educational setting, given the distinct goals of such settings. In doing so, a first step will be to consider the goals of a liberal arts education. In taking this course, it is



*Seven Liberal Arts, Francesco Pesellino*

unlikely that you will emerge having mastered these challenges, as they are challenges that reflect the magnitude of liberal education itself. For instance, a teacher might wish to produce a lifelong learner, might even know what actions are conducive to doing so, and still have a long way to travel before having the capacity of cultivating a lifelong learner. This course aims at identifying the challenges and providing tools toward mastering them. There may follow years of attempting to apply those tools before feeling as though you have arrived at any level of mastery.

In each of our four weeks, we will address one of the four challenges.

- Week one: the challenge of magnanimity
- Week two: the challenge of love
- Week three: the challenge of shepherding
- Week four: the challenge of oratory

This course includes readings, discussion boards, written reflections, live (virtual) Socratic seminars, and the opportunity to compose and deliver a speech. Fully engaging in both the asynchronous assignments and synchronous meetings will acquaint you with the distinctive obstacles faced by leaders in a classical liberal education setting and offer guidance on navigating these challenges.

### Text:

- Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Penguin Classics. 2004. ISBN: 978-0140449495

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## Pathways



## Competency



**Classical Ethos, Pathos,  
and Logos**

## Lives of Leaders: Thomas More

This course serves as an introduction to the life and leadership of Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), Chancellor of England and a pillar of the Western intellectual tradition. Drawing from a selection of works written by More and about him, we will examine the variety of ways in which More responded to the contingencies of his day, as well as the virtues he cultivated which made such responses possible. Particular emphasis will be given to More's characteristic combination of sobriety and good humor, his concern for the danger of pride, his diligent regard for his fellow citizens, and his dynamic approach to the moral life.

**Text:**

- *A Thomas More Source Book* by Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith



*A Portrait of Thomas More*

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### Pathways



### Competency



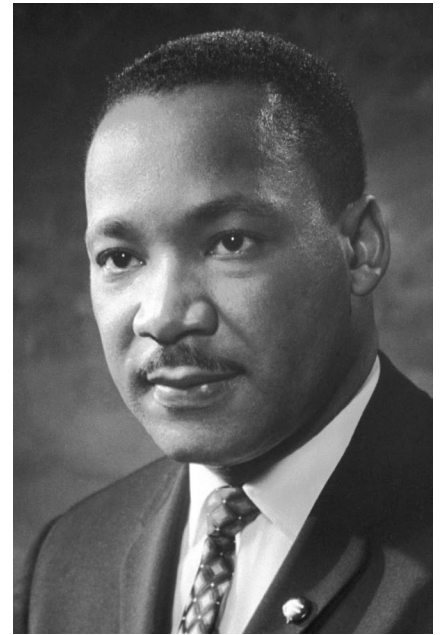
**Classical Ethos, Pathos, and Logos**

## Lives of Leaders: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is a daunting task to offer a course on one of the most important people in history. It is not possible, in such a short time, to capture the breadth and depth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We are not quite done capturing his magnificence, and continued reflection—from poets, historians, philosophers, teachers, and the public at large—can only produce a better understanding of the man. Rather than attempt to give a comprehensive view, then, this course aims to engage with some of Dr. King’s most pivotal writings and most crucial events. As you work your way through the modules, feel free to supplement them with your own research. The hope is that this course will inspire you to live up to the kind of community that Dr. King was trying to shape.

### Text:

- King, Martin Luther. *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*. Special 75th Anniversary Edition ed., Harper Collins, 1991.



*A Portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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### Pathways



### Competency



**Classical Ethos, Pathos, and Logos**

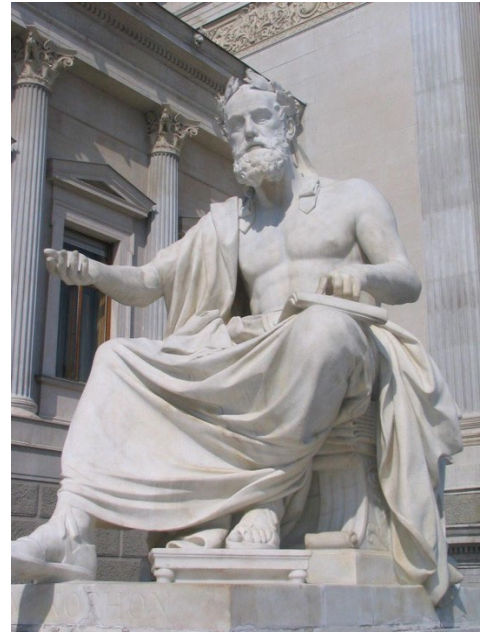


## Lives of Leaders: Xenophon

In this course, learners will examine Xenophon’s life and work. They will explore several themes related to leadership, including how following well is a prerequisite to leading well, what it takes to become a leader, and how interpersonal relationships evolve in the transition into leadership positions. The course concludes with an opportunity to reflect on what was learned and apply it explicitly to the practicalities of institutional leadership. Additionally, learners will participate in an open forum with Headmaster Poppleton which will allow the opportunity to ask questions about his experience in leadership in light of our study of Xenophon.

### Texts:

- Xenophon’s *Anabasis of Cyrus*
- A selection from Xenophon’s *Education of Cyrus*
- Diogenes Laertius’ biographical essay, “Life of Xenophon.”



*Statue of Xenophon  
outside Parliament, Vienna, Austria*

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### Pathways

Teacher-  
Leader

Aspiring  
Tier II  
Leader

Aspiring  
Head of  
School

### Competency

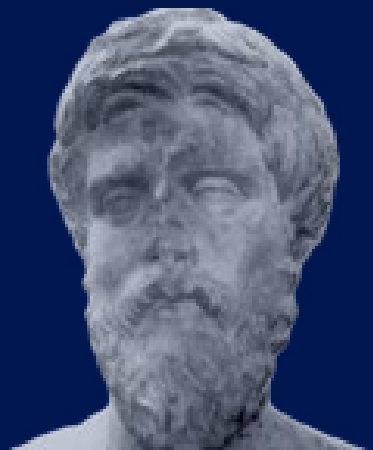


**Classical Ethos, Pathos,  
and Logos**



“We must ... receive glory from [our mentors], together with their goodwill and friendship, since, as Plato says, people cannot be good leaders unless they have first been good servants.”

— Plutarch,  
“How to Be a Good Leader”



**GreatHearts<sup>®</sup>**

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