



## PRACTICAL WISDOM PROJECT

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### FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Karen E. Bohlin

PRACTICAL WISDOM PROJECT  
ABIGAIL ADAMS INSTITUTE  
14 ARROW ST. G10 CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

*We began our work with educational leaders the summer of 2021 and officially launched the Practical Wisdom Project at the Abigail Adams Institute in the Fall of 2021 with a seed gift from the John Templeton Foundation. We are grateful to both the John Templeton Foundation and to the Kern Family Foundation for their generous support over this last year. The Abigail Adams Institute and my team here at the Practical Wisdom Project have been amazing collaborators in our first year of operation.*

*At the Practical Wisdom Project, we believe that what counts most as a leader committed to building formative institutions is to develop practical wisdom, what Aristotle called phronesis or “good sense.” Practical wisdom is the disposition to perceive and deliberate well in context, to aim at what matters most and adjudicate competing goods, so we can take the right actions, at the right time, for the right reasons, and help others to do the same.*

***We believe that every leader has the capacity to grow in practical wisdom.***

*This is precisely why we engage leadership teams in immersive professional education. And what a privilege it has been this past year to work alongside schools, networks of schools, universities and nonprofits eager to operationalize their formative mission so their students can thrive and flourish. This newsletter highlights our engagement and collaboration over the last sixteen months. It offers links to our publications and resources as well as to our Executive Education Program, Practical Wisdom for Agile Leadership.*

*If you would like to learn more about ways to engage with us or bring one of our programs to your institution: **Courageous Dialogue: Practical Wisdom for Coaching Conversations, Practical Wisdom for Parenting with Joy & Purpose or The Schooling of Desire: Practical Wisdom from Philosophy, Art & Film on a Pedagogy of the Person**, please email me at [kbohlin@abigailadamsinstitute.org](mailto:kbohlin@abigailadamsinstitute.org).*

Warmest regards,  
Karen

[abigailadamsinstitute.org/practical-wisdom-project-at-aai](https://abigailadamsinstitute.org/practical-wisdom-project-at-aai)

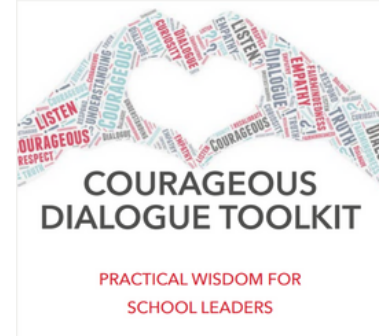


# Recent Publications

## COURAGEOUS DIALOGUE

Would you like to build bridges rather than fences? Are you preparing for a meeting fraught with conflict? Consult the [Courageous Dialogue Toolkit: Practical Wisdom for School Leaders](#)--and all leaders, including parents and CEOs. Co-authors Barbara Whitlock and Karen Bohlin (2021) have led workshops on Courageous Dialogue at **5 national convenings** this past year and invited students to join them for an **international webinar** hosted by the Greater Good Science Center ([watch here](#)). Cited as a core reference at a **national conference for medical educators**, the *Courageous Dialogue Toolkit* is now included in professional education syllabi around the world.

In November, Director, Karen Bohlin, was invited to present on **Dialogue as a Pedagogy for Promoting Practical Wisdom** at an international convening of university professors held at the Press Club in Washington DC.



## PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR LEADERS

Do you need a compass to navigate daily stress tests with calm and purpose? See Bohlin's "[Practical Wisdom Framework: A Compass for School Leaders](#)" in the Journal of Education, 2022(2), 156–165 for a theoretically grounded practitioner-based account of how you and your team can figure out what to do, when you don't know what to do in a practically wise way. This article introduces our Practical Wisdom Framework™ leadership intervention.

## EDUCATING CHARACTER THROUGH POETRY

In a culture of memes, sensational headlines, and short videos gone viral, poetry is more relevant now than ever. Can poetry awaken the moral imagination of your students and attune their heart to what matters most? For a pedagogical account, see Karen Bohlin's new chapter "Educating the Heart: Why Poetry Matters" in [Educating for Character Through the Arts](#) (Routledge, 2023) edited by Laura D'Olimpio, Panos Paris, Aidan P. Thompson.



### EDUCATING CHARACTER THROUGH THE ARTS

Edited by  
Laura D'Olimpio, Panos Paris and Aidan P. Thompson



For additional pedagogical approaches to engaging students meaningfully with literature, see Bohlin's [interview](#) with Tom Harrison from the Jubilee Centre and her book [Teaching Character Education Through Literature](#) (Routledge, 2005), now translated into Spanish, [Educando el Carácter a Través de la Literatura](#) (Didaskalo, 2020) and recently featured in the September 2022 issue of [Misión Magazine](#)

## PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR AGILE LEADERSHIP EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2022 COHORT

**Practical Wisdom for Agile Leadership** is an **executive education program** designed for school leaders eager to activate their leadership compass and operationalize their formative mission, putting students' growth and flourishing at the center of all they do. Participants learn what *The Practical Wisdom Framework™* (PWF) is, why it matters, and how it can be applied in all aspects of school life to promote character, flourishing, and community.

4  
Leadership Teams

7  
Schools

urban, rural, suburban, public & private  
in AL, CA, FL, TX, WI

3500+  
Students

*“Schools are formative institutions, and the quandaries educators face daily require nuanced thinking and judgment calls, not one-size-fits-all answers. Justice and fairness need to coexist with mercy and compassion. When enforcing policy, compliance must make room for flexibility in special cases. In other words, leaders are called to adjudicate competing goods all day long and they teach others with their example and practice to do the same. This is why we say practical wisdom is the core DNA of formative leadership.”* Karen E. Bohlin



*The Practical Wisdom Project is grateful to the Kern Family Foundation for its support of the design and launch of the inaugural Executive Education Program.*



# The Power of the Arts to Promote Practical Wisdom



Medný, Ladislav. Kneeling Convict. 1878, painting. Slovak National Gallery.

**What is it about a work of art that invites us to see the world in a more nuanced way?** Refining our ability to see and perceive well is crucial to practical wisdom. This past year, the Practical Wisdom Project Team offered programs to engage participants with art, artifacts and texts in ways that evoke awe, wonder and ethical inquiry and teach them to be more fully present.

Our 2022 fall seminar on **Rembrandt and the Schooling of Desire** attracted Harvard University students and faculty alongside local community members—restaurant employees, journalists, teachers, nurses, and museum educators.

Our summer seminars led by Practical Wisdom Project Visiting Fellow **Miroslava Duranková** from the Great Works Academy in Slovakia included an in depth exploration of **Caravaggio's Calling of St. Matthew** hosted at the Abigail Adams Institute and a sixty minute discussion of **Ladislav Medný's Kneeling Convict** hosted by the Kern Partners for Character and Educational Leadership (KPCLE) Convening at Boston College.

**"It was incredibly powerful,"** said Michael Lamb of Wake Forest University, about Miroslava's workshop. **"I haven't forgotten that session,"** David Walker of University of Alabama remarked three months later. **"For one full hour we were completely immersed. I did not expect to be so taken with the experience."**

**"I am so grateful I came.  
This feeds my soul."**

**- Teacher participating in the Rembrandt seminar**



Practical Wisdom Project Visiting Fellow Miroslava Duranková from Great Works Academy Slovakia,

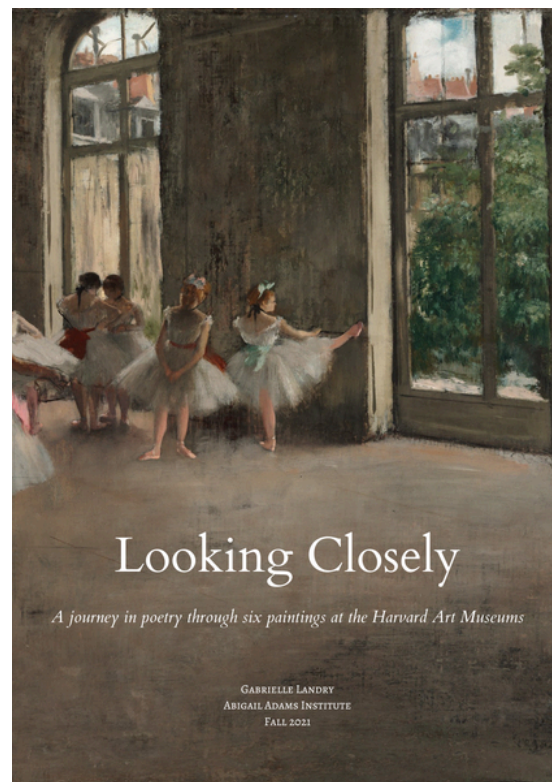
In September, Abigail Adams Institute John Aroutounian Fellow **Gabrielle Landry (Harvard College '23)** created a student guide for an evening at the Harvard Art Museum and published an original set of poems based on the museum's artwork, in a collection she entitled *Looking Closely* (featured right).

## Rembrandt & the Schooling of Desire



Harvard  
Art Museum

In November, Project Director **Karen Bohlin** led a seminar for the wider community on one of Rembrandt's lesser known masterpieces and what it illuminates about education and what she calls, the **"schooling of desire."**



## GREATER GOOD SCIENCE CENTER “TOP TEN” ARTICLE

If you would like to help your students Become the Best Version of Themselves, see Bohlin and Kris's piece, ranked a **2021 Top Ten Article in Education** by the Greater Good Science Center at University of California, Berkeley.



## AMBASSADOR OF CHARACTER AWARD

On **September 8, 2022 at Oriel College, Oxford University**, Karen Bohlin, Practical Wisdom Project Director, was recognized with the **Jubilee Centre's Ambassador of Character Award** for her contributions as a distinguished educator and thought leader. Heather Templeton Dill, president of the John Templeton Foundation, presented the Award as part of the Jubilee Centre's tenth annual conference, **Integrating Research on Character and Virtues: 10 Years of Impact**.



## HARVARD CLUB OF BOSTON HONOR

**Harvard Club of Boston** honored Karen Bohlin with their **Friends of Education Award** on **October 20, 2022** at their annual Book Prize Breakfast for students. Harvard Alumnus and Book Prize Committee member, Paul Brennan, commended her twenty-five plus years of leadership, scholarship and teaching, noting that Dr. Bohlin served thousands of students, families, and educators in her work at Montrose School, the LifeCompass Institute and Boston University. “Building on that legacy,” Brennan concluded, “Karen now directs the Practical Wisdom Project at the Abigail Adams Institute in Cambridge "shining a light on a crucial need in the world today: leadership for human flourishing.” She is pictured here with President of the Harvard Club, Marcus DeFlorimonte.



# Engagement through Professional Development

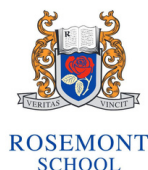
**37 Invited Keynotes, Workshops, Webinars for  
3000+ educators from more than 300 institutions worldwide.**

*What follows is a sampling of hosting organizations.*

## UNIVERSITIES



## K-12 SCHOOLS



## SCHOOL NETWORKS



## OTHER ORGANIZATIONS



# Our Team

## ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

The Practical Wisdom Project bids fond farewell to Associate Director, **Danielle Killen**, who will begin her next chapter as a new parent! We are grateful to Danielle for her strategic leadership developing our program offerings and building a solid foundation for our future work. A former chief of staff in the university and non-profit setting, a learning designer and project lead at the Harvard Catalyst - The Harvard Clinical and Translational Science Center - and at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Danielle brought enormous practical wisdom to our team in our inaugural year. She holds a BA from the University of Notre Dame and an MA in education from Harvard.



## COMMUNICATIONS



**James Capuzzi** is Director of Marketing & Communications at AAI and a pivotal player supporting our online executive education program and web platform. He holds an MA degree in Sustainable Cultural Heritage Management from the American University of Rome and a BA degree in Classical Studies & Italian Language from Tulane University in New Orleans.

## VISITING FELLOW

From April through June 2022, The Practical Wisdom Project welcomed **Miroslava Durankova** as a Visiting Fellow. She is a co-founder and director of Great Works Academy in Slovakia. Miroslava holds an MA in Character Education from the University of Birmingham and a degree in economics from the University of Economics in Bratislava.



## STUDENT INTERNS



*Gabrielle Landry '23  
Harvard University*

Gabrielle Landry is a junior from North Attleboro, MA, studying philosophy and education at Harvard College. In addition to her work on the Practical Wisdom Project Team, she has served as a Research Assistant to legal scholar and author, Erika Bachiochi. Outside AAI, Gabby blogs, writes poetry, and dances with Candela Dance Troupe at Harvard.

Manee Namani is a Senior Research Assistant and an MA student at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. For the last several years she has served as an administrator in a Nigerian school serving over 1000 students. Prior to that she worked in a software start up and managed her own company. She is passionate about integrating technology and online learning with education for flourishing.



*Manee Namani '23 Harvard  
Graduate School of Education*