



Embracing Public Participation: A whole systems approach to
organizational change
January 2016

Laura McDonald

Damon Brown

Objectives

- Where We Started
- Challenges and Opportunities
- Culture Shift Decision and Implementation
- Culture Shift View From the Outside
- Carrying Culture Shift Forward
- Public Participation Becomes Integrated
- The Results
- Final Thoughts

Our Journey Begins in 2002

- St Vrain Valley School District discovers a large budget shortfall



Public Participation Challenges

- conflict-driven media
- heavy reliance on “experts”
- polarized ideological interests
- history of “decide, announce & defend” tactics
- rising distrust for institutions and government
- lack of P2 values in popular culture

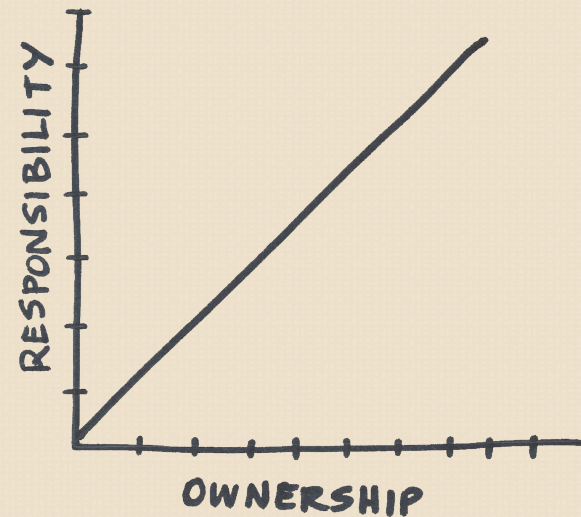
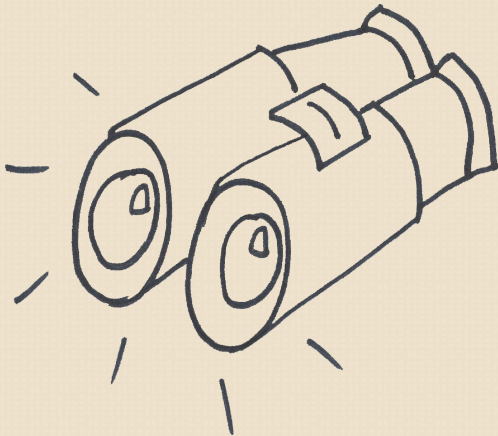
Culture Shift

- Status quo did not serve the best interests of students, parents, employees, or the community
- Needed knowledge and trust of community
- No easy way to do it
- Building one relationship at a time through genuine conversations



Cultural Change View From the Outside

- Message changed from
 - Vote YES on what we have put on the ballot to
 - You show us what you would support having on the ballot
- Ownership Shift = Responsibility Shift



IAP2 Core Values

- 1 Public participation is based on a belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2 Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- 4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

IAP2 Core Values

- 1 Public participation is based on a belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2 Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- 4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Leadership St. Vrain Know How

District

- org. structure
- governance
- budget
- schools & curriculum
- student services
- P2/deliberation skills



State/Local

- elected officials
- school finance
- state Board of Ed.
- state & federal laws
- state education policy
- PK-12 legislation

Leadership St. Vrain Know Who

District

- superintendent
- board president
- leadership team (asst. superintendents., exec. directors, etc.)

State/Local

- legislators
- state ed. board
- state dept. leads
- local municipal leaders
- law enforcement

Administrative Buy In & Increased P2 Capacity

- Since 2008
 - Deepened commitment to public participation and deliberative problem solving
 - Substantive impacts to operational and organizational cultures
- Some of the steps taken to strengthen the district's capacity of public participation include:
 - Staff training
 - Parent and administrator training
 - Job reorganization
 - Policy modifications

File: KCB

Public Participation in Decision Making

The Board of Education endorses the concept that public participation in the affairs of the schools is essential if the school system and the community are to maintain mutual confidence and respect and work together to improve the academic achievement of students in the district. It therefore intends to take steps to identify the desires and concerns of the community and be responsive, through its actions, to those desires and concerns.

All citizens of the district are encouraged to express their ideas, concerns and judgments about the schools through such means as written suggestions or proposals; presentations at hearings; responses to surveys made through interviews, written instruments or other means; comments at meetings of the Board; service on citizens' advisory committees; participation in focus groups and involvement in community engagement and deliberative problem-solving processes.

The advice and concerns expressed by the school community will be given careful consideration. In the evaluation of such input, the first concern will be for the educational program as it affects students. The Board's final decision may depart from the views expressed by some members of the school community when in the judgment of the Board such views are not consistent with good educational practice or within reach of available financial resources.

Adopted: October 28, 2015

CROSS REFS.: BDF, Advisory Committees
BEDH, Public Participation at School Board Meetings

P2 Continues...

- Marked increase in community trust for the district and its leadership.
- Leadership expects that the district act as a partner with its stakeholders
- Parents and other stakeholders routinely participate in robust deliberative processes

Parents Influence important decisions

➤ Security

➤ Facilities

➤ Budget Cuts

➤ New Funding

Our greatest accomplishment...

The academic achievement and success of our students

- Over the past 9 years, St. Vrain students have continued to deliver:
 - An upward trend in standardized test scores
 - Increased graduation percentages
 - Decreased numbers of students dropping out
 - Increased scholarship awards for students
- 78% of St. Vrain's 52 schools are accredited with Distinction or Performance
- Over 50% of secondary students currently take one or more advanced level course(s)
- District ACT scores are above the state average in every content area

Final Thoughts

“Never before have I seen so many competing interests, so many people with different viewpoints, ways in which they view the world, ways in which they think we should approach public education. And as a leader, what I’ve come to understand clearly, is that in order to make the best and most sound decisions, it’s absolutely critical to involve all your stakeholders.”

Don Haddad, Ed.D., Superintendent

2009-2015 public participation within

St. Vrain Valley Schools

ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOLS
academic excellence by design



Leadership St. Vrain

Each year, a cohort of St. Vrain parents and staff engage in a formal training program that includes public participation training.



Budget Crisis

Community-wide deliberation forum on district response to state budget cuts; includes online surveys, live streamed public forum, professional P2 facilitation.



Managing Growth

Residents of Erie community deliberate on population growth and impacts associated with a new elementary school including boundaries, traffic and safety.

Questions?



School Security

In the wake of Sandy Hook's tragedy, parents, teachers, administrators, students and police work through competing interests of school security and learning environment.



1:1 Technology Plan

Parents from across the district work through concerns and create recommendations for the implementation of plan to provide every middle and high schooler a tablet.



Parent Leaders

Parent volunteer Laura McDonald named Daily Camera Pacesetter of the Year for leadership in public participation, engagement and education advocacy at the state capitol.