

# Involving Stakeholders in the Visioning Process

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# Every technology team faces four challenges:

To establish a **dialogue** among all stakeholders.

To establish a **self-consistent identity** within the group.

To focus on **activities** that are required to maintain group integrity.

To keep **future changes** consistent with what has gone on before.

# What could go wrong?

- Here's a true story about a district's technology plan that went awry.
- It developed a terrific peer training program.
- It wired up all the schools and distributed computers equitably.
- Internet use spread among participating teachers.

# What finally happened?

- The school board wasn't kept informed about the outcomes of the technology plan.
- Administrative support was lost.
- Technology coordinators were reassigned to the classroom.
- Parents began to ask: “What did you do with our tax money??”

Wisdom is learning from the  
mistakes of others so that you  
don't repeat them yourself.  
(Old Indian proverb)

# What can we learn from this?

- Technology team members should be representative of the school community.
- All stakeholders should have input into the technology design.
- Skeptical voices must be heard, lest they become saboteurs.
- The team should have power to implement, evaluate, and refine the technology plan.

# The technology team should...

- represent **all roles** within the school and community-at-large;
- be able to **make decisions and allocate resources** -- time, money, support;
- facilitate the growth and development of **each stakeholder's own identity**; and
- develop **coherence** and community spirit among its membership.

# What do the experts say about teams?

- A small group of people can change the world. (Margaret Mead)
- There is enormous transformative power created through shared talk. New levels of dialogue can produce new levels of coordinated action. (William Isaacs)



# Effective team members...

- believe that they can make a difference in the world...
- ...communicate with each other deeply, honestly, and creatively...
- ...organize themselves with total absence of hierarchy and bureaucracy...
- ...govern themselves by shared stewardship...

- ...take full advantage of their unique and collective potential...
- ...take responsibility for the continuing development of their individual and collective capabilities...
- ...nurture and practice genuine and authentic participation...

- ...knowing they can rely on each other,
- trust, honor, and support each other,
- share values, aspirations, and hopes, and
- live by a collectively defined code of ethics. (B.H. Banathy)

# How does this apply to school improvement?

- The creation of an educational image cannot -- and should not-- be the prerogative of a chosen few. It is the collective responsibility of people and social groups in each and every community. (B.H. Banathy)

# These are high ideals, but...

- How do we create and articulate this educational image?
- How can we be sure that the perspectives of all stakeholders are honored throughout the development and implementation of the technology plan?

# Initiate a dialogue.

- Through hearing each others' stories, we engage diverse perspectives and knowledge, essential to engendering transformative power (Karen Norum)
- We create a “community of mind” -- an ongoing dialogue, in which all voices are heard and considered, and in which multiple perspectives are valued.

This sounds wonderful,  
but...  
what's the current reality?

# We need to move from here...

- **Principal:** “We applied for the E-rate and now we need a technology plan.”
- **Teacher:** “My principal assigned me to this team. I really don’t know why I am here...”
- **Technology Coordinator:** “We need to decrease the student/computer ratio.”
- **Parent:** “We’ve spent all this money. What is technology doing to help my child?”



...to here.

- Each team member must **find their voice** and realize they have something worthwhile to say.
- Each team member must **be invited** to the conversation and listened to.
- Each team member must **be included** and authentically engaged in the conversation.

# How do we initiate a dialogue?

- Start by getting the team together and developing an air of camaraderie.
- Give members the choice to participate, to air their resistances and fears safely.
- Listen to what they are saying beneath their words. What are their tacit assumptions?

Sounds great,  
but...  
how do we facilitate this?

# Choose a good facilitator.

- The facilitator's role in systemic change is one of working with stakeholders to create the type of community that they ideally would like -- facilitating the process of creating community through stakeholders' desires and actions. (Peter Jenlink)

# A facilitator has three roles...

- **to set the agenda** for an ongoing dialogue,
- **to create a friendly environment** for generative listening so team members can hear beneath the words and create meaning, and
- **to focus the dialogue** on how to work together and create change.

# Where do we go from here?

- The team must concentrate on keeping the dialogue going and transforming it into a force for initiating, implementing, and institutionalizing the technology plan.

Fine,  
but...what happens  
when people disagree?

# Conflict is a catalyst for change.

- The role of the skeptic is to challenge, inform, and suggest alternative courses of action.
- Listen to what they have to say. Ask them:
  - Why do you feel that way?
  - How did you come to that understanding?
  - Can you clarify, explain, or justify it?
- Disagreements can show team members where to dig deeper.



# Digging deeper leads to progress.

- “Progress arises from continual criticism and efforts to overcome criticisms by modifying or replacing theories.” (Carl Bereiter)
- There are four important commitments that team members must make, if a dialogue is going to result in positive action.

# Commitment #1

- First, team members must work toward a **common understanding** that is satisfactory to all.
- This is different from a willingness to compromise, which is basically a barter situation.

## Commitment #2

- Second, team members must frame their questions, arguments, and propositions **in ways that will allow evidence to be brought to bear on them.**
- This means making your position vulnerable, not just to *your* evidence, but to what *other* team members will consider as evidence as well.

## Commitment #3

- Third, team members must seek to **expand the conversation to new ideas and new types of evidence** upon which to base these ideas.
- This is not like a trial in which lawyers seek to minimize the amount of evidence that their opponents can bring into a courtroom so they can defend their position.

# Commitment #4

- This is the trickiest one: team members must remain **open-minded**.
- Team members must allow any belief to be subjected to criticism if it will advance the dialogue.

# Dialogue or discussion?

- These four commitments are what distinguishes a discussion from a dialogue.
- To **discuss** is to fortify your position.  
“Discussion” has the same root as “percussion” or “concussion”: to break apart.
- To **dialogue** is to promote a free flow of meaning throughout the team.

# O.K. We've listened. Now what?

- By working in concert, and focusing on what they want to accomplish, people can create more of what they want for themselves, their families, and their communities. (May Lowry)

# Initiate some action...

- Team members are **in charge**.
- Their mission is **systemic change**.
- Their primary activity is the development of new leaders and **building of capacity**.
- They focus their efforts on **the school's vision for technology**.



This sounds good,  
but...  
where do we begin?

# Do you have a vision statement?

- Is it clear?
- Can you state it in 25 words or less?
- Is everyone familiar with it?
- Do they agree with it?

# If not, then here's what to do...

- **Vision:** restate the school's vision statement. Then apply it to technology.
- **Mission:** restate the school's mission statement. Then apply it to technology.
- **Goals:** There should be only 1 to 3 goals, possibly adopted from national, state, or district goals for technology.

# Actions should match that vision.

- The technology team's aim is action to initiate, implement, and institutionalize the technology plan.
- They always maintain an awareness of the school, district, and community context.

# Vision = shared meaning.

- Shared meaning is the “glue” or “cement” that holds people, societies, and communities together. (David Bohm)

# Vision = shared value.

- Shared values, when held as sacred and central to the “community of mind”, can then be transformed into a unifying foundation from which systemic change design decisions are made for the benefit of the school system. (Patrick Jenlink)

How do we turn that vision into concerted action to promote and sustain systemic change?

# First...

- Focus on the school's vision and mission statement.
- Start by asking,
  - What are we doing for the children?
  - For the teachers?
  - For the school and district?
  - For the parents and the community?"



# Next...

- Start building capacity within the team. Share authority, roles, and responsibilities among the stakeholders.
- Nurture in all team members the ability to evolve and grow, to become more fully who they are, and to realize how they may serve all children in the school, the district, and the community.

# And finally...

- Apply that Old Indian Proverb. Don't repeat the mistakes of others. **Don't let a few people do all of the work.**
- Look to the future.
  - What will happen when the leadership changes?
  - When the membership changes?

# Leadership can and will change.

- An organization gathered an advisory board of stakeholders to get their input and keep them informed of progress.
- The stakeholders wound up doing all the work. They did not increase the capacity of the team by sharing the work load with new leaders and advocates of their vision.

# What finally happened?

- The initial changes were effective, but as leaders moved on, the project disappeared as well.
- This is a true story. **What would you do differently?**

# Membership can and will change.

- A school started with a visionary school board. There were strong partnerships in place with an innovative technology program. There was adequate funding.
- As years passed, several members left the district's school board and were replaced by newer members. The new folk didn't always share the original vision.

# Visions can clash.

- The old guard was committed to engaged learning and innovative student computer use. One new member was an advocate of “Back to the Basics”.
- He gave a copy of E.D. Hirsch’s book to all the members of the board. He promoted core learning at all school board meetings.

# What finally happened?

- The school board was divided. They began to question whether their vision was correct.
- Administrative support waned. The technology plan floundered. And the students were caught in the middle!
- This is a true story. **What would you do differently?**

How can the technology team  
prevent such mistakes from  
happening?



# Focus on the vision, mission, and goals.

- Embracing authentic stakeholder participation while honoring diversity of perspectives is essential to understanding and informing the systemic change process. Holding the core ideals sacred is crucial to the sustainability of a change community.  
(Patrick Jenlink)

# Make the team a community of practice.

- Communities are defined by their centers of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of WE from a collection of I's. (Sergiovanni)

# Where will these efforts take us?

- In time, and with focus on a common vision, members will easily and naturally attune to what is best for themselves, the team, the school, the district, and the community as a whole.

# Summary Questions

- Who are the real stakeholders? Are all included? Have we honored diversity?
- Do we have a set of values that we can “cohere” around?
- Is there an ongoing dialogue?
- Finally, can the technology team sustain itself and the plan in the face of change?