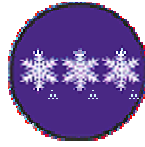




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World of Organizational Change

**IMPLEMENTING CHANGE AT SJUSD: AN UNFINISHED CASE STUDY**

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**Abstract**

The end of the 20th century saw tumultuous changes in the San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) that had an immense impact on staff development. The District's perspective of staff development is now one of professional development and growth. This paper chronicles the evolution of the professional development model from in-service training to individual

professional growth. The background leading up to the professional development change initiative and the lessons learned are described in this paper.

### **The Case for Change**

After a relatively long history of stability, the San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) was buffeted by a series of external and internal forces that would test the mettle of any organization. The District started the 1980's with a divisive 11-day teacher strike followed by bankruptcy in 1981. In 1986, the Court ordered desegregation of local schools, a directive that required a shift away from neighborhood schools to schools of choice, necessitating an extremely costly busing program. Enrollment roller coasted. The demographics of the student population changed with a substantive increase in non-English speaking students. The Board of Education discovered that the Superintendent had falsified his application, and he was removed. Union and management went into another era of hostile relationships resulting in walkouts and fear of strikes that lasted for over a year. Tight budgets, severe cutbacks in District services, declining enrollment, and low staff morale characterize the early portion of the 1990's. District studies, conducted in the mid-90's, projected that over 60% of the current teaching and administrative staff would be leaving the District within five years.

External to the District, the California legislature ordered no more than 20 students in every K-3 grade classroom, a change that many embraced, but which also taxed the facilities capacity of Districts. It resulted in a severe teacher shortage throughout the State. Meanwhile within Silicon Valley, high paying high tech jobs affected career choices of college students, reducing the pool of students entering the teaching field. At the same time, California continued to fund education at one of the lowest per student rates in the Country, further limiting needed resources to large urban school districts with challenged student populations like SJUSD.

At the same time, businesses in Silicon Valley searching for additional employees began to emphasize the need for schools to produce more highly qualified students to enter their work forces. Awkwardly but with focused intent and some resources, they began to form coalitions to reform public schools. In 1994, Dr. Linda Murray, the new SJUSD superintendent, embraced these reform efforts and began a process of collaboration and partnership that now characterizes the District. A major target of the reform effort has been centered on the development of qualified teachers, prepared to teach in ways that enable more students to learn.

### The Change Initiative

The Superintendent established the Committee of 100, a body of community and school leaders, which served as a focus group. In a series of wide ranging discussions, themes for school reform emerged. Garnering resources through partnerships and grant applications, a number of these reform efforts were initiated. Some schools had two or three different reform initiatives going at the same time.

Out of this maelstrom of activity, a group coalesced around the issue of how to more effectively educate educators. SJUSD took the lead in calling together representatives from universities and city colleges, private foundations, school sites, school reform organizations, and business. Gradually, they formed the Higher Education Alliance (HEA), a core team of representatives from six universities and colleges, IBM, District Office personnel, and representatives from interested schools. This Alliance met regularly, struggling to identify how it could best impact improvement in the education of educators. The HEA endorsed and supported District grant proposals for innovation in professional development. Grants from the Danforth Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, and the IBM Reinventing Education program were awarded to the District for implementing a series of pilots connected to teacher education. IBM, the host of

the first meetings and a participant in HEA, provided a substantial grant involving both funds and personnel resources. Of all the funders, the IBM participants were the most active, engaged partners. Their contribution, both in funds and personnel, included a broad view of the role of technology in education and professional development.

A series of HEA meetings fostered the establishment of three professional development schools, a clinical model summer school, the crafting of technology and professional practice standards, and action research projects for teachers. During this time HEA brought in a professional, external facilitator to support the process and help move ideas to action. Over the next five years the facilitator worked with some of the pilot projects, particularly those that had difficult partnerships or more complex designs.

The clinical model summer school was a significant undertaking. During the summer, SJUSD routinely conducted a four-week elementary summer school at a number of school sites. Funding from the Danforth, Hewlett, and IBM Grants enabled one of the summer school sites to be transformed into a teacher summer school as well. Twelve classroom teachers were selected, math was identified as the target area, and the classroom teachers participated in designing an articulated and integrated curriculum for the summer program.

Student and experienced teachers enrolled as teacher participants for the two-week teacher-training portion of the program. These participating teachers formed teaching teams with the classroom teachers. The District, San Jose State University, and The National Center for Accelerated Schools at Stanford provided these teaching teams with training sessions. Topics covered included teamwork, effective teaching practices (including integration of technology), assessment and evaluation of students, professional portfolio development, and the Institute of Cultural Affairs' (IAF) focused conversation method for structured reflection. Each day the

teaching teams had an hour of reflection/planning time. Each week the whole teaching community came together to share learnings and explore new topics.

Extensive student and teacher assessment was conducted during each year of the three pilot programs. Data from each pilot informed the design of the next year's pilot.

The funders for all of these innovative initiatives required not only program evaluation and assessment but also institutionalization of best practices from the pilots. In response to these requirements, SJUSD pulled together a team of teachers and administrators involved in professional development to develop a Master Plan for Professional Development incorporating the essential findings of the professional development schools and summer clinical model initiatives.

The Master Plan is a multi-year, multi-phased plan that starts with improving coordination of professional development resources at the school site and placing more of the resources traditionally centered in the District Office at the school sites. The District Office continues to offer professional development workshops and trainings and to coordinate districtwide programs like the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA). The general approach, however, is shifting to one that supports school site professional development, based on unique site-specific learning needs and the school's strategic plan, and that supports individual teacher performance and growth as evaluated by professional practice standards, professional growth portfolios, and school data.

Throughout this process, San Jose State University has been undergoing a radical shift in its approach to educating educators. In the transition there have been hard fought battles over the future direction of the College of Education's programs. One of the system constraints is the difficulty of changing practices in academic institutions. Another is the lack of absolute evidence

that the changes we believe are beneficial in preparing teachers are better than what is currently being used. Finally there are few academics with the practical experience in the emerging model (student teachers in cohort groups at school sites for extended periods along with university classes taught at the school site in conjunction with the school's academic program). The challenge is so great that some school districts have developed their own teacher education programs totally bypassing the institutions of higher learning.

SJUSD made the decision to build capacity through collaborations including California's higher education system. This collaborative process has helped to infuse the District with additional funding new perspectives, and accountability requirements. It has also been challenging, difficult, and at times draining.

As we look at SJUSD, we see concrete changes in the education of educators that are gradually being integrated into the ongoing systems and programs of the District. For instance in the summer of 2000, four summer school sites will have clinical model programs, including a bilingual model and two middle school adaptations. Fifteen schools now have part-time, on-site professional development coaches helping to coordinate the sites' professional development activities. Over 200 new teachers are participating in BTSA, and SJSU is shifting the emphasis of its teacher education programs. The number of professional development schools with their community of learners is expanding. Student and teaching standards are established and the measurement systems to determine their achievement are being put in place.

It is our team's belief that our work is but one part of a much larger shift in education. We have been fortunate to have the funding and the opportunity to participate on the cutting edge of innovations in teaching practices that will ultimately be common. On this journey of the last several years, there are some patterns, themes, and lessons learned that stand out to us. We share

these with you, recognizing that some of the lessons may not yet be apparent, still unfolding as time and distance reveal them to us.

## **Lessons Learned**

### **1. Most Organizations Operate in a Crisis Mode; Do Not Let It Stop You!**

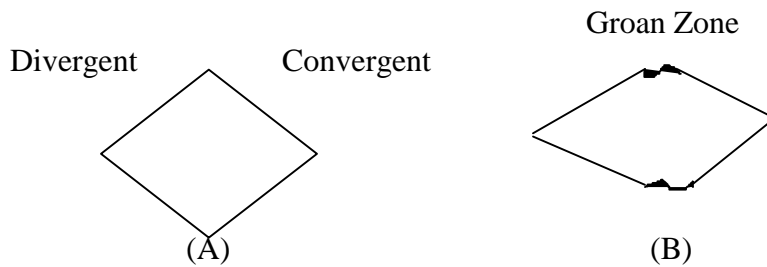
During the five years of our work on this project, SJUSD went through several crises, as did our key partners. In one case, the partner organization went through a rapid growth period, only to begin a decline that has resulted in its demise. Two of its key staff members had personal issues that required leaving their positions, and it had three changes of leadership in one year. Another partner had two changes of leadership and a dispute about how to best teach teachers how to teach.

Regardless of the crises, the strand that you are weaving must continue or it will be lost. Perseverance of cause in the face of adversity, indifference, and chaos is an essential attribute.

### **2. Collaboration Is Hard**

Developing an effective collaboration takes time and energy. Forming relationships built on trust and mutual benefit requires nurturing and care. Partners need to be willing to work through the hard times as well as the easier times. We found that having an external, objective facilitator was essential to working through issues with partners. In particular issues evolving from partners changing direction and partnerships represented by people who were irresponsible or unable to meet their responsibilities.

We learned that having processes and structures to help us through blocks made our work together easier. For instance, late in the game we began to use the divergent/convergent model (A) of team process to help us consider where we were in a discussion or process.



Sam Kaner's addition of the groan zone (B) to the divergent/convergent model helped us understand when some members of the group became impatient with the exploration phase of our process.

Finding the best methods, tools, and structures to help us work and think together increased our productivity and sense of collaboration.

### 3. Change Is Messy and Expensive; It Is An Experiential & Evolutionary Process

Biological models can help us learn how change occurs. Many of us have an image of change as a linear process yielding greater effectiveness and efficiency -- we start at point A and end up at point B. A few years ago that was how we saw DNA -- 2 strands of genetic material that were perfectly constructed and matched. Disease was defined as a defect in the DNA.

Today, we know that DNA has a lot of clutter and the two strands don't necessarily match. With this understanding, disease can better be redefined as defects in the corrective action of the DNA's enzymes. The clutter in DNA is a benefit because it provides the potential for variability that the organism may need to respond to changing conditions.

In most organizations, particularly education, accuracy and efficiency is highly prized. Error seems life threatening. Forces executing pressure to save time, reduce costs, and avoid duplication predominate. We found, however, that we had a lot of clutter. We were not always efficient. We had lots of meetings trying to understand each other, to find areas of agreement, to

rework details, and to experiment with ways to do things. Many of which ultimately proved fruitless.

It was important that the initiative had enough slack, enough resources, and enough emotional commitment that the trial and error needed to experiment was permitted to occur. We learned as much from our failures as from our successes. Systemic change efforts need room to fail, learn from failure, and move forward. Without that room, it's unlikely that a sustaining path will be found.

#### 4. Pressure Helps

The grants funding a good portion of our work required yearly reports. The reports included measurements of success - - accountability tied to data. The fact that we needed to make these reports forced us early on to design measurement systems into our programs. The fact that we needed to make these reports predisposed us to reflect on and systematically evaluate the work that we were doing. Reporting requirements motivated us to modify our programs to ensure that our work and the reports of our work improved each year.

At the same time that grants were requiring increased accountability for the use of their funds, the public was demanding an increase in accountability for student learning. The pressure to insure that our work -- educating educators -- tied to student outcomes was great. The emphasis on student learning helped us more crisply define our outcomes and design our evaluation system.

The grants also committed us to institutionalizing our learnings. It was not enough to have a successful pilot. The District was expected to make systemic changes. We used this commitment to focus staff time and energy on the institutionalization phase of the project.

#### 5. Consistent, Dedicated Leadership Is Essential

Though there was a revolving door of leadership from some of our partners, we sustained a core leadership team - - the District's project manager, the IBM representatives, the facilitator, and the Director of SJUSD Community Relations and External Affairs. Dr. Linda Murray, the Superintendent of Schools, has been at SJUSD during the heart of the project and continues to champion the need to change how teachers are educated. She supported the partnership approach and provided acknowledgment to the leadership team on the value of their work. Given that the average tenure for Superintendents of Schools is less than three years, we were fortunate to have continuity of District leadership.

The project also benefited from having one project manager, who had worked at school sites and in the District Office. Her career touched all parts of the process of educating educators. She was seen as one of the people school sites could count on to do what she said she'd do, and that it would be good! Her reservoir of experience, is one of the most important factors in moving this initiative from innovative pilot to systemic change.

#### 6. Develop Capacity to Make the Change Systemic

During the course of this initiative, we found that:

-- people needed new skills sets. For instance, because the initiative was built around collaborating with others to educate educators, team members needed to learn facilitation skills. Leadership team members and teachers also had to understand, value, and apply evaluation/measurement tools.

-- a technology infrastructure to communicate with partners and to teach teachers how to use technology needed to be in place.

-- a common "image" of what's really being done and what's possible needed to be created. In our case, professional development was occurring through various individuals at

school sites, the professional development staff at the District, and through multiple departments within the District. The budget of the Professional Development department was small, looking at the overall need for professional development. Looking at the overall expenditure of funds and staff time, a large amount of money was being spent -- somewhat fragmented, unaccountable, and undisciplined -- BUT SPENT. A new image for the team was to look at the total expenditures from a Districtwide perspective and see how the money could be used more effectively.

As we developed an expanding circle of capacity with staff in the District and with our partners, we began to develop the critical mass needed to move the initiative to the next phase -- replication and institutionalization. More people spoke a similar language and had a common frame-of-reference.

#### 7. You Don't See Progress; If You Don't Stand Back

When you are in the midst of a major change process, it is hard to see progress. The change may be a personal or a system change. The requirement to report forced us to reflect on our work, progress, and assumptions. We built in many opportunities to evaluate and to discuss core assumptions.

For all of the teachers, the daily reflection period was one of the most significant components of the clinical model summer school. We used the Institute of Culture Affairs' "Focused Conversation Method" as the basis for teacher reflection and discussion. The teachers began to see their teaching practices more clearly, how they impacted their students, other ways they might be able to reach a student, and how they could work more effectively together as a team. The reflection period helped them focus on the significant actions they could take to make a difference the next day and with each other.

When we started to prepare this paper, we reviewed and brainstormed a nine-year timeline of the major events, trends, and forces that influenced the course of the project. As we looked at the timeline, we were surprised at the roots of our work i.e., what had influenced the development of our initiative. With such clarity earlier, we might have been able to work more effectively with each other and with the organizations that our work touched.

#### 8. Community and Relationship Building Sustains Through The Hard Times

Building community takes time and intent. Many people see it as a waste of time. But, as we reflected on our experiences, focusing on community building for the leadership team and within the pilot programs, building community turned out to be important. People wanted to participate in various parts of the program, because they understood the broader context, had a voice in the decisions that were made, and received support from the leadership team and their peers.

Many people involved in a minor way in the pilots, stayed with the programs over the next few years in roles of increased responsibility and importance. They stayed because they liked being part of something that was bigger than themselves and to which they could contribute their unique talents and gifts.

#### 9. Activating Spirit

Ultimately, the people who stayed involved with this initiative over a five-year time frame did so because it contributed something to them. We built into our work the opportunity for people to think outside of the box; to work in creative ways; to try and to fail and to learn from the failures; to explore; and to stretch. Even highly rated teachers with 35 years experience indicated that they felt renewed by learning new and more powerful teaching methodologies as participants in the summer clinical model.

In terms of the core leadership of the project, we knew that we were there for each other. We supported each other through work crises, the deaths of a consultant and a spouse, and the loss of cherished dreams. We celebrated small accomplishments and the occasional large one. We laughed and we cried together. The reason that we hung in there through so many obstacles is, in large part, because we knew we mattered to each other, and that together we were making a difference.

### **Summary**

The ability of an organization to integrate healthy changes is not automatic. It takes persistent effort, talented people, and substantive funds. Forces of resistance and bureaucratic inertia limit the impact of most change efforts.

To change systems in a way that honors the people within them is often overlooked and the brute hand of force crafts a new reality by mandate and/or fear. In our case, we felt a need to educate educators about teaching in a way that models the way we want them to teach children. Force and fear are poor teaching models. Educators need to learn how to facilitate not mandate learning, to bring new research and learning tools to their students, and to encourage a balance of creativity and rational thinking in their students. Educators can't learn how to teach in these ways in an environment of fear and suspicion. Thus, we worked hard to create a positive climate for growth and change, building on people's natural desires to learn and improve.

We believe that to most of the people involved in the redesign of professional development at SJUSD, the process was one of creativity, exploration, and growth. On the other hand the core leadership took the brunt of the conflict, crisis mode, disinterest, and bureaucratic red tape.

It is somewhat problematic that the lessons learned from the last five years are not fully embedded in how SJUSD will continue to educate educators. However, the pathway has at least been established. The next few years will determine if the pathway becomes engrained. Since a part of our pathway includes reflection and continuous improvement of the professional development process, we don't expect for the "model" to be chiseled in stone. The model will be shaped by the intelligence, reason, and spirit of those that continue to find ways to better educate educators.

### **The Presenters**

#### Mary Ann Rokovich, San Jose Unified School District

Mary Ann is the SJUSD Program Manager for Professional Development with an emphasis on external grants. She promotes, facilitates, evaluates, and sustains the professional growth components of innovative grants including IBM's Reinventing Education Grant. She helped initiate the Higher Education Alliance and facilitated the leadership team that designed and implemented the summer clinical model. Previous assignments include summer school program manager, supervisor of instructional support, and 17 years of teaching. She has presented at conferences including the Magnet Schools of America Conference, US Department of Education's 1998 Regional Technical Assistance Conference, and California Association of Bilingual Educators State Conference.

#### Jane Stallman, Stallman Communications

Jane works with organizations to create strategic action plans that have a high level of commitment and successful implementation. This work includes various groups including educators. Education clients include the San Jose Unified School District, the Mountain View Elementary School District, and the HEA. Jane has managed professional development and

organization development for Lockheed's Skunk Works. She is a faculty member at The University of Phoenix, has an E.M.B.A. from Claremont Graduate School, and is a qualified trainer for ICA, TOPTM courses.

Margene Stevens, IBM

Margene has taught in universities, K-12 classrooms, and adult schools. While working as a staff administrator she began consulting for IBM, helping educators select and implement appropriate educational technology. She has served on standards formation, leadership, evaluation, and design team committees throughout the phases of the IBM/SJUSD Reinventing Education Grant. She has broad experience as a conference facilitator/presenter for the International Society of Technology Educators and International Reading Association. She is an active member of Phi Beta Phi and past president of Gamma Rho Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa.