

Agenda for April 20, 2005 Meeting with GTF Team from Clear Creek-Amana and Mt. Vernon (Notes in Red – Attendance record kept separately)

Welcome & Introductions.

- Embarking on a different kind of planning.
- Work is being conducted on behalf of the state, who's interested in alternative plans and designs for schools of the future.
- This project is to take a long-term view for school systems – what's the next generation of schools look like for Clear Creek-Amana, Mt. Vernon and other schools in Iowa.
- Our task is to unshackle our thinking and design a school system that is capable of meeting the changing demands, expectations and needs.
- Introductions of participants.

Introducing the Team to the Grant – What is the Work?

- Group will spend time with abstract/other segments as appropriate of the grant and discuss: “How does this sound different from other planning work you've been involved with? How does it sound similar?”
- Responses (the following attempts to capture the essence of the conversation and is not verbatim but rather reflects the general tone and questions/responses from the note taker's perspective):
 - “It's different not starting with a specific goal.” Susan-“Are you nervous about that?” “No, it just makes me look for one as we talk.”
 - I'm wondering about the assumptions underlying this proposal and approach. Often planning doesn't start with or ever deal with assumptions. It appears that this process is very cognizant of uncovering all the possible assumptions. What were yours as you wrote this grant?
 - Response (not voiced during the meeting but provided here to honor the question and provide an answer): Our primary assumption in designing this grant was simply this: The current design and delivery of schooling can be improved some more but, ultimately, it must be re-designed to fit appropriately into the context we find ourselves in today. We believe that despite many people's best efforts to create “reform models,” “rigor,” etc. schools will not be able to deliver the results our society and world demand today. It is analogous to attempting to send the power created from a nuclear plant through electrical wires and grids developed in the 1920's. The basic design simply cannot support the new demands and expectations.
 - I feel a sense of urgency, the way it is working now isn't going to sustain us.
 - The notion of “successive approximations” flies in the face of “conventional wisdom” where everyone wants results on this year's tests –

they want the “quick fix.” This might be the toughest thing to manage during this process.

- Our new high school – any physical school structure – sets physical limits to what we can have.
- Susan: We all think about where we are and where we want to go but this approach (Idealized Design) is a new way of looking at things. The essential difference between traditional strategic planning that we are familiar with (identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and predict where we need to be in 5 years) and this planning is a subtle but important one. In Idealized Design we ask the question: “What would we have if we could have what we wanted TODAY?” This gives the designers permission to not worry about predicting the future accurately, which in today’s world is next to impossible, and allows us to envision and build the ‘next generation’ as we would want it today. It is not an ‘ideal’ design, it is ‘idealized.’ What’s the best design we can possibly conceive of today knowing that when we know better in the future we can adjust and adapt our design to meet those demands.
- Susan cont: The other element of this process that is absolutely critical is that we must move planning out of the board room/administrator meetings and into the community. We must engage the community in helping us to imagine what the best system might be – they must grasp this new design. The basic idea is to change the way people think about the organization called ‘school.’ If we can do that, we forever change the expectations the community has.
- “How will the community know what is possible?”
- Susan: This is a big challenge. We have all gone through “school” and therefore, bring a certain well-defined mental model of what that looks like. Getting community members to rid themselves of those constraints, throw off the shackles and think about what might be possible is the goal.
- Trace: It is critical to involve all demographic segments of your communities. For example, if we don’t find out what the high school drop-out envisions for a ‘next generation school’ then we will have missed a critically important perspective. This is true for all our demographics.
- “This is exciting because it’s not just about being more efficient.”
- “I’m not interested in being a part of a ‘think tank’ or any other group that just comes up with a neat set of ideas and designs. I want this to result in something.”
- Susan: Well said – here’s another challenge that will lie squarely with the leadership of your schools and communities. If we can create a compelling design of a preferred future for our schools and we have adequately engaged our community then we stand an excellent chance of getting the opportunity to implement the design. That involves making decisions about what we can change today, in a year, or can only work to influence a larger system (government, etc) to make changes necessary. The beauty is when the community designs its own preferred future, the way to achieving it becomes an imperative, a demand. It’s then leadership’s job to execute the plan.

Roles, Responsibilities, & Timeline. (Trace)

- Roles & Responsibilities:
 - Active participant in the stages of the design process.
 - Engage community groups to gather input and ideas regarding the design (with help and support from GW Planning & Development as needed)
 - Synthesize community findings and draft possible “next generation” design(s).
 - Contact point with community to both gather information and disseminate and clarify the design.
- Timeline:
 - Year One: first 6 months will require time for this group to meet in ½ or full days and some shorter meetings with community groups. Next 6 months will be periodic group meetings and sharing findings with community groups.
 - Year Two: more supervisory and reflective – overseeing execution of agreed upon actions, gauging community reactions, etc.

Cognitive Preparation for June (Susan)

- Susan put together the foundational pieces for the group to prepare to hear Jamshid in June and to begin to frame this work against more commonly known/understood processes for thinking about systems.

To Do’s”

- Copies of Jamshid Gharajedaghi’s book will be purchased for the leadership team and distributed in the next couple of weeks.
- All participant emails will be collected and put on a list serv for efficient communications.
- Notes and materials will be placed on Susan’s website www.pkrnet.com

Materials Connected to This Meeting (most available on website):

- Consultant Biographies.
- Abstract of the Grant.
- Three Ways of Looking at Schools.