

From Enragement to Engagement: Building Support, Creating Solutions

NSPRA Seminar 2011

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Welcome & Overview

I. Introductions

II. Overview of Presentation

- Case Study – Wydown Tomorrow
 - Background – Enragement
 - Moving forward – Engagement
- 10 Core Principles
 1. Begin by listening
 2. Attend to people’s concerns
 3. Get beyond the usual suspects
 4. Frame the issues for discussion
 5. Provide the “right” information
 6. Move beyond wishful thinking
 7. Expect obstacles and resistance
 8. Provide variety of dialogue
 9. Respond thoughtfully and conscientiously
 10. Build long-term capacity
- Public Engagement Model
 - Getting Organized
 - Developing Options
 - Analyzing Options

The Engagement Process

I. Getting Organized

Model

- Board of Education charge
- Recruit and convene committee

Core Principles

- Frame the issues for discussion
 - Begin with a clear purpose
 - Manage people’s expectations
- Get beyond the usual suspects
 - Find ways to include the broader public
 - Bell curve – reach out to people in the middle

Case Study

- BOE had a clear charge to give:
 - Study options for addressing facility needs at WMS

- Gather community feedback
- Present a final report summarizing feedback received on various options for WMS
 - Options verse recommendations
- BOE set parameters:
 - School would stay on the existing site
 - Total project must cost less than \$40 million
 - Building would provide for an enrollment of 550 students
- Wydown Today Committee was formed
 - Recruited 16-member committee
 - Parents, teachers, community members, BOA member
 - All areas of district
 - Committee chairs
 - Architect and construction manager consultants
 - BOE liaison
 - District staff support

II. Developing Options

Model

- Committee work paralleled with input from community, funneling/processing until ideas and options are narrowed
- Ongoing two-way, meaningful communication
- Open process
- Planned meetings and events
- Presentations from experts
- Small group work sessions

Core Principles

- Begin by listening
 - Careful and systematic listening
 - Find out where the non-experts are
 - Avoid starting with faulty assumptions
 - Will create conversations that are meaningful in light of their interests, concerns and in common language
- Attend to people's concerns
 - Need to reconcile:
 - What "they're" worried about
 - What "you're" worried about
 - Where are the gaps and what needs to be acknowledged in order to move forward together?
- Get beyond the usual suspects
 - Make special effort to reach out to the broader community
- Provide the "right" information
 - Right type
 - Right amount
 - Right time
 - Avoid overloading with "data dump"
- Expect obstacles and resistance
 - If it's not messy, it's not working

- Takes time and repeated opportunities to work through problems and build common ground
- Provide variety of dialogue
 - Multiple and varied opportunities to learn about, talk about, think and act on problem at hand
 - Consider media and medium

Case Study

- Committee worked in correlation with community feedback
 - Committee:
 - Multiple meetings to brainstorm and develop various options
 - Considered previous studies
 - Identified and quantified school's needs
 - Considered previous studies
 - Identified construction issues, focusing on the continuity of education
 - Formed sub-committees to study issues
 - In total, 10 schemes were developed and then narrowed down
 - Community feedback:
 - Open meetings and public comment
 - Interactive website
 - Back-to-school events
 - Special meeting for immediate neighbors
 - Newsletter updates
 - Student presentations
 - "Middle School Monday" Tours
 - Community video
- Open and responsive to feedback from immediate neighbors
- The committee would move forward with two options

III. Analyzing Options

Model

- Analyze options
 - Committee prioritizes
 - Committee compares
 - Community input
 - Refine options
 - If further analysis is needed, the options go back to the committee
- Final options brought to BOE

Core Principles

- Move beyond wishful thinking
 - Time to focus on real solutions
 - Manage expectations
 - Move past knee-jerk reactions
- Provide variety of dialogue
 - Again, need to create varied opportunities to involve greater community
- Expect obstacles and resistance
 - Not everyone will be on board
- Respond thoughtfully and conscientiously
 - Close the loop

- Explain how engagement fits into the “big picture” moving forward
- Increases personal stake
- Energize citizens to want to roll up their sleeves and get involved
- Build long-term capacity
 - Set the state for broader and deeper public engagement in the future
 - The work should operate on two levels simultaneously:
 - Addressing a concrete problem
 - Building “social intelligence” – the capacity for a democratic community to communicate and collaborate effectively in order to solve its common problems and enrich its public life

Case Study

- The committee had created two options:
 - Option One: Re-use parts of existing facility
 - Option Two: Builds an all-new school
- The committee set priorities to help analyze,
- They analyzed and compared the options, considering how they each met the project parameters, goals and priorities as well as the pros and cons
- Opportunities for community feedback continued, focused on the two options. More than 280 weighed in.
 - Mailer
 - Open House
 - Online survey
 - One-on-one conversations
- Little refining to options
- The committee stopped short of a single recommendation, but presented the two options and their committee and community analysis to the BOE

Moving Forward

- Moving forward with success – Proposition W and Wydown Today
 - Community was prepared to move forward with a solution, and were supportive at the polls
 - Committee members were essential in moving forward with Proposition W and Wydown Today
- Lessons learned
- Questions

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Source

“Public Engagement: A Primer from Public Agenda.” Public Agenda, Center for Advances in Public Engagement, No. 1, 2008.