



Community Engagement: Building Support for Public Education

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Wisconsin Association of School Boards

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Strong Opinions, Strongly Held



“Senate OKs Walker's budget plan as Dems return”

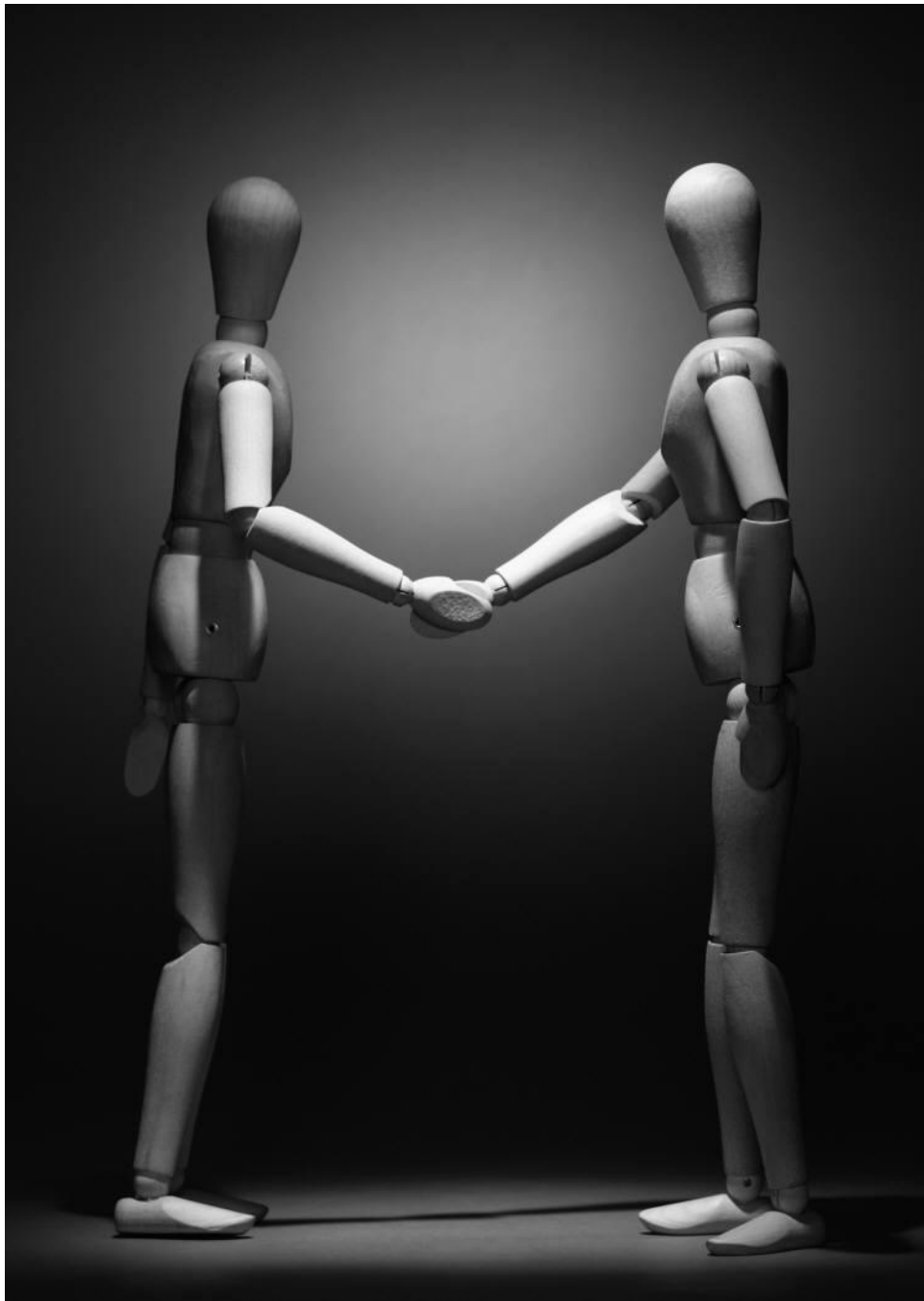
“...the politics of the broken-hearted.”

Parker Palmer



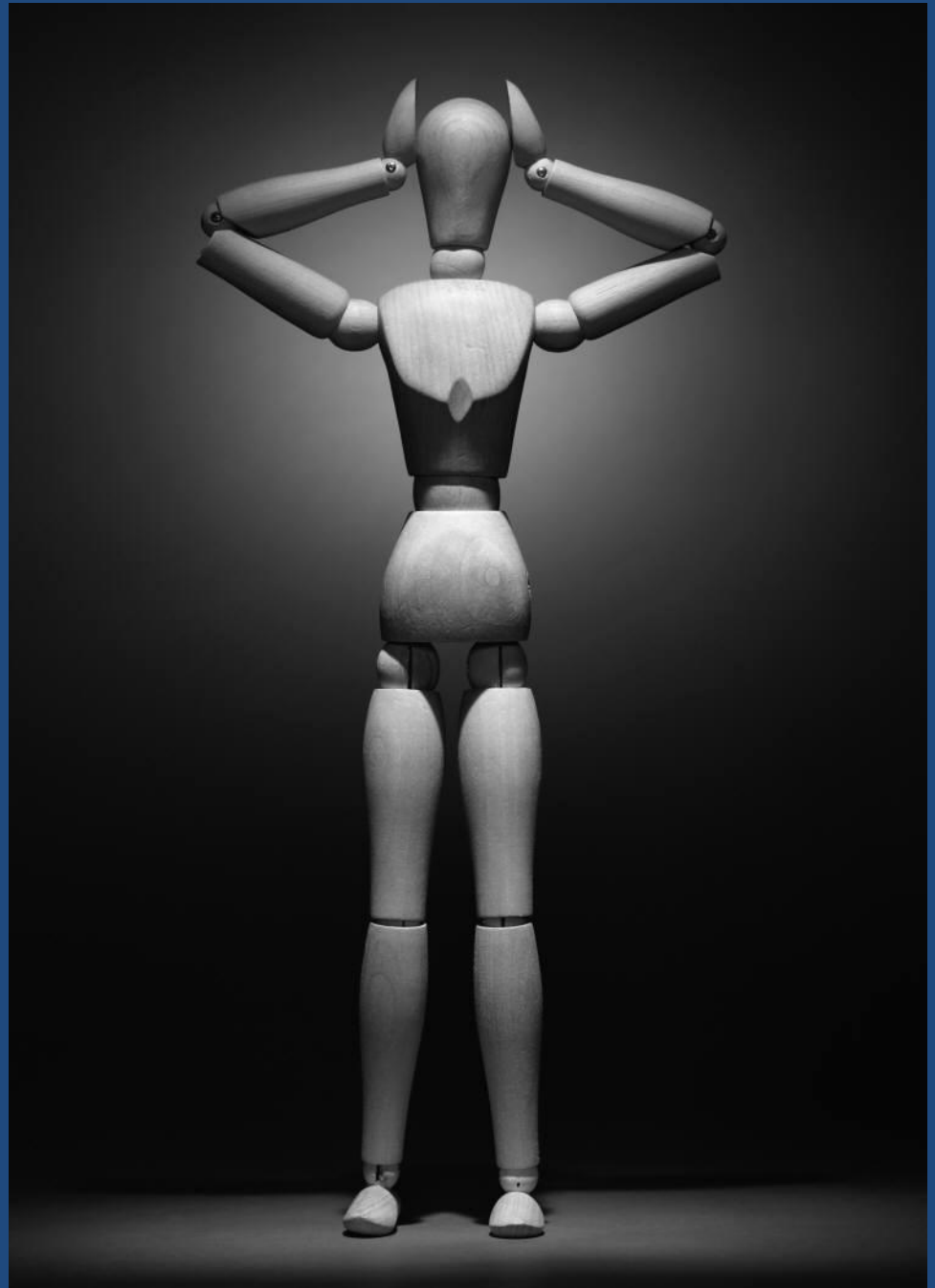
There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Margaret Wheatley



Our aim is to engage
the right people
at the right time
with the most
helpful processes
for making decisions.

What gets
in our way?



Five dysfunctions of a team





WHAT IS TRUST?



In silence...
What words come to mind when
you look at this photograph?

TRUST (one definition)

The firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability and strength of someone or something.

Trust in the business world

Return to shareholders is

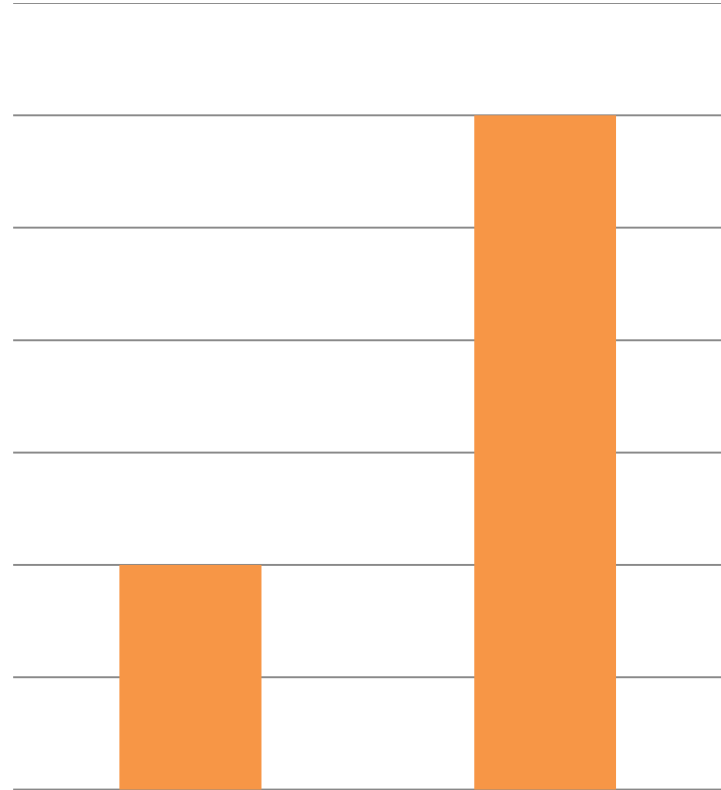
3x higher

at companies with

high trust levels

than at companies

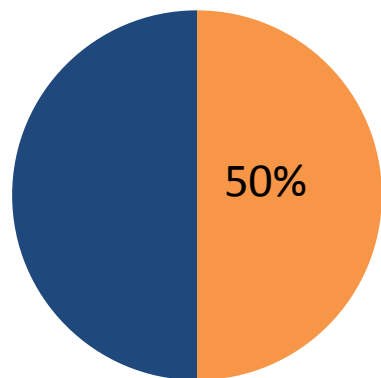
with low trust levels



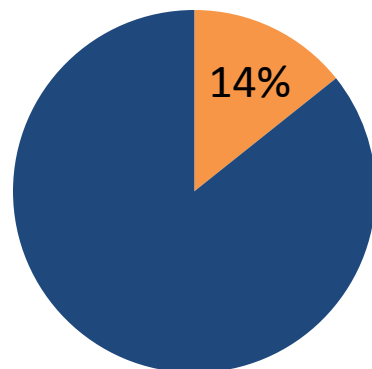
Trust in education

Closing the
achievement gap

high
trust schools



low
trust schools



Improving academic
performance

8 percent
improvement in reading

20 percent
improvement in math



Building a foundation of trust

- Give people the benefit of the doubt
- Admit mistakes
- Offer and accept authentic apologies
- Focus time and energy on important issues
- Welcome questions
- Provide opportunities for genuine exchange about concerns and aspirations

Schools and communities shift from communication to engagement

communicate *to* → deliberate *with*

establish and
protect turf → find common ground

hold public
hearings → host community
conversations and engage
the public

Who is “the public”?

The
Public



IT'S YOUR TURN

Think about an issue in your district where the public wants to weigh in—maybe in a way that's uncomfortable.

Share with your partner:

- What is the area?
- On a scale of 0-10, what is the trust level in this area?
- What have you done to engage people so far?
- What has worked, and what hasn't?

Planning for public participation



- Gain internal commitment
- Learn from the public
- Select the level of participation
- Define the decision process and participation objectives
- Design the public participation plan

Gain internal commitment

- What is the core problem/opportunity?
- What “publics” are affected?
- What impact will the decision have on them?
- How much do major stakeholders care about this issue and the decision?
- What is the potential for public outrage?
- What degree of participation does the public appear to want?
- What can we accomplish with public exchange that we can't accomplish without it?



Learn from the public

- What is the core problem/opportunity from your perspective?
- What impact will the decision have on you?
- Who else will be affected?
- What degree of participation do you want?
- What can we accomplish together that we can't accomplish alone?

Select the level of participation

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Promise
to the
Public

Inform

We will keep you informed.

Consult

We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

Involve

We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

Collaborate

We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.

Empower

We will implement what you decide.



Genuine Invitations



WELCOME

Invitation is the
means through
which hospitality
is created.

Peter Block

Actually having the conversation



- Set the the purpose and parameters of each dialogue
- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage everyone's contribution
- Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
- Listen together for patterns, insights
- Harvest and share collective discoveries

The way
we change
the room
is by changing
the conversation.

Peter Block





Creating a Shared Vision

What are your hopes and dreams for public education?

The Macon Miracle



What can the Bibb School District do to redesign education and create an example that ensures all students have the opportunity to learn?

To be successful...

- Be clear about what you intend to accomplish
- Follow through
- Remember, there's no one right way
- Allocate sufficient time and resources
(genuine engagement isn't quick or easy)
- Get external support

The alternative to engagement with the public will not be an unengaged public, but a public with its own agenda and an understandable hostility to decision-making processes that ignore them.

Steve Coleman and John Gotze,
Bowling Together, 2002



THANK YOU!
