

When you ask people, 'What's the opposite of fragile?,' they tend to say robust, resilient, adaptable, solid, strong. That's not it. The opposite of fragile is something that gains from disorder.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

quote fancy



Board/Superintendent Relationship & Board/Community Relationship



Brief 3-Year History



Highlights from 2018-2019



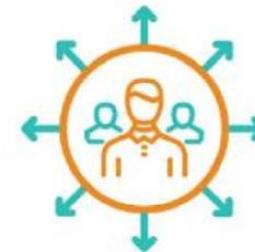
ACTIONS TO DATE BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS

- Merger Criteria – Closed three campuses (William Wood Elementary, Guadalupe Elementary, F.W. Gross Elementary).
- Moved Mitchell DAEP to Liberty Academy Site
- Liberty Early College Students merged to East and West High School supporting a more inclusive program.
- Liberty Academy expanded Credit Recovery program.
- Received Designation as a System of Great Schools District.
- Received Planning Grants for two School Action grants supporting expansion of Early Childhood and campus re-start programs.
- “Student as Learner” and “Student as Person” becomes a focus.



Spring 2019 Thoughtexchange Results

FAST FACT



8 in 10

employers say social and emotional skills are the most important to success and yet are also the hardest skills to find.¹³

Announcements

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING!

July 2019

Task Force present
recommendations to Board of
Trustees

August 2019

VISD Board of Trustees
Adopt Resolution

Board of Trustees Victoria Independent School District

Resolution Supporting 2018-2019 Task Force Recommendations

I. Recitals

Victoria Independent School District (VISD) is committed to continuous improvement in all we do and deeply values a community ownership model which results in making the best possible decisions for all stakeholders.

VISD believes dialogue, radical transparency and accessibility are key to making complex decisions with our community. Connecting with our community is a dynamic and ever-changing process and we endeavor to "meet people where they are" by having in-person, digital, and traditional media conversations.

VISD is embarking on a bright, new future as we update our school improvement process using the Effective Schools Framework, the System of Great Schools and internal processes. These structures guide the overall focus and content of our strategic plan.

VISD believes our students' futures rely on a high-quality education system that prepares them for college, career, and military readiness. Recognizing the complex nature and critical importance of our mission, we have challenged our task forces to partner with us in "Designing Our Future." It is through this collaborative design process that we now commit to these next steps.

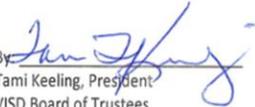
II. Resolution

We, Victoria Independent School District, hereby solidify our commitment to the work completed as well as the work still ahead. Be it resolved:

- We will continue to seek input from and utilize the task forces as partners with VISD as we work to establish a strategic vision with the community. This strategic vision shall include:
 - A ten-year facilities study and facilities needs assessment inclusive of demographic studies when relevant and applicable.
 - A technology plan to develop a robust digital ecosystem to support technology-rich learning environments.
 - A communication process with a focus on transparency and accessibility for all.
- We will support the continued work of the Superintendent's Task Forces by serving as Trustee liaisons to those task forces as appropriate. As liaisons we commit to attending and listening, and further commit to neither influence discussion nor vote on matters before any task force.
- We will embrace and celebrate courageous leadership.
- We will cultivate and foster deep strategic partnerships and community-wide ownership of learning and redefining excellence for VISD
- We will nurture public will and understanding for transformation.
- We will enact administrative regulations which call for a three-year cycle of reviewing current attendance zones and making appropriate zoning adjustments as necessary based on enrollment, demographic information and housing development projections.

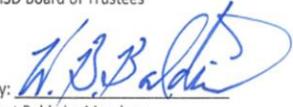
- We will encourage and inspire the work of the Elementary and Secondary Task Forces to support their efforts to create a culture and climate that addresses the social and emotional needs of all students, all staff and community. We will wholeheartedly embrace not just the needs of our "students as learners" but also the needs of our "students as people".
- We will methodically strive to prepare our students for their future and a successful launch from elementary school into middle school, from middle school into high school and from high school into the world of work, higher education or the military.
- We encourage the development of a robust mentoring program and continued professional development for our teachers for them to be fully prepared in the classroom.
- We encourage further clarification from the task forces and VISD staff around learning pathways in order to see this effort manifest from vision to reality.
- We recognize the need for local accountability models to be created and deployed in the spirit of measuring our progress and celebrating our successes along the way.

PASSED AND APPROVED on this 22nd day of August 2019.

By: 
Tami Keeling, President
VISD Board of Trustees

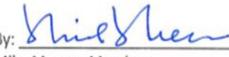
By: 
Kevin VanHook, Vice President
VISD Board of Trustees

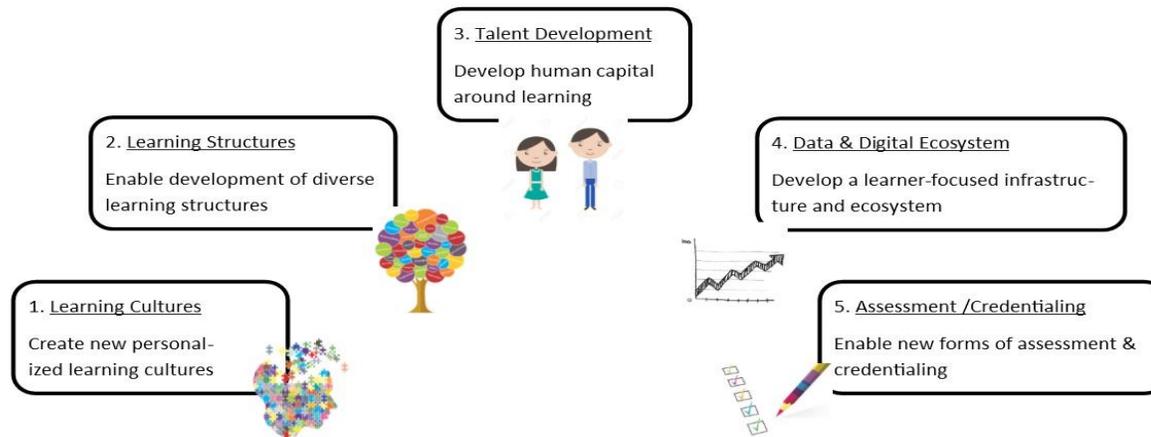
By: 
Margaret Pruett, Secretary
VISD Board of Trustees

By: 
Bret Baldwin, Member
VISD Board of Trustees

By: 
Dr. Estella De Los Santos, Member
VISD Board of Trustees

By: 
Ross Mansker, Member
VISD Board of Trustees

By: 
Mike Mercer, Member
VISD Board of Trustees



Transform the Core of Learning



Transform Supporting Systemic Structures



The paradigm Shift

- ▶ Decision-making paradigm shift with Boards of Trustees and Community
- ▶ It is imperative that we move away from words like “engagement” and “buy-in” and towards words like “ownership”



Two thoughts...

- ▶ The smartest person in the room...

**IF YOU'RE
THE SMARTEST
PERSON IN
THE ROOM,
THEN YOU'RE IN
THE WRONG ROOM.**

**“WHERE
YOU
STAND
DEPENDS
ON WHERE
YOU
SIT.”
- NELSON MANDELA**

The paradigm Shift

From “Communication” to “Radical Transparency”

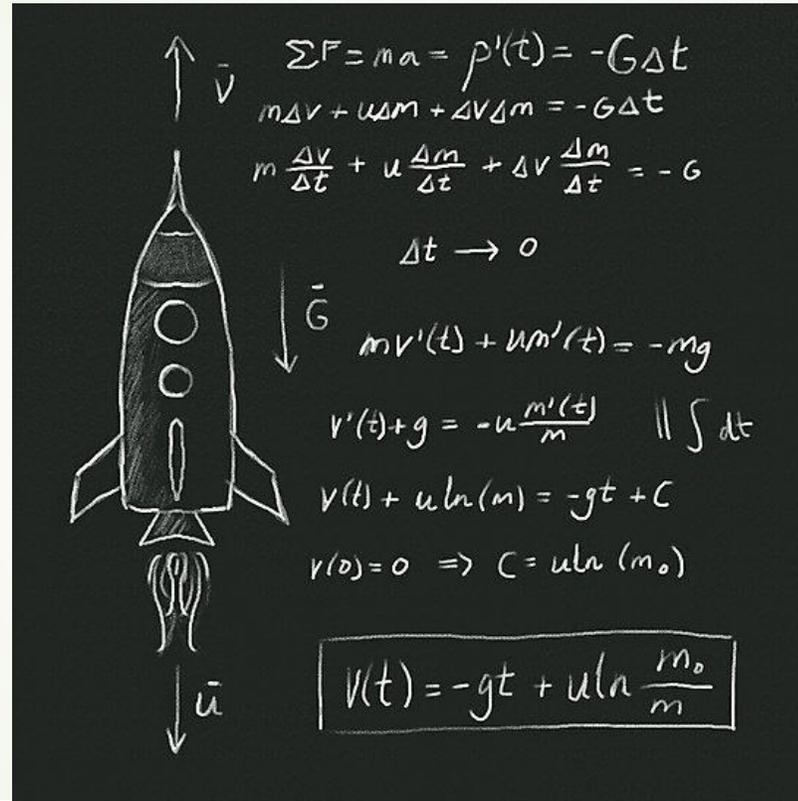
“Radical Transparency” is our lifeblood

But, who gets to make what decisions?



What's
next?

Governance isn't rocket science...



A hand-drawn diagram of a rocket pointing upwards. To the left of the rocket, an upward arrow is labeled \vec{v} . To the right, a downward arrow is labeled \vec{G} . Below the rocket, a downward arrow is labeled \vec{u} . The diagram is surrounded by mathematical equations for a rocket's motion with variable mass.

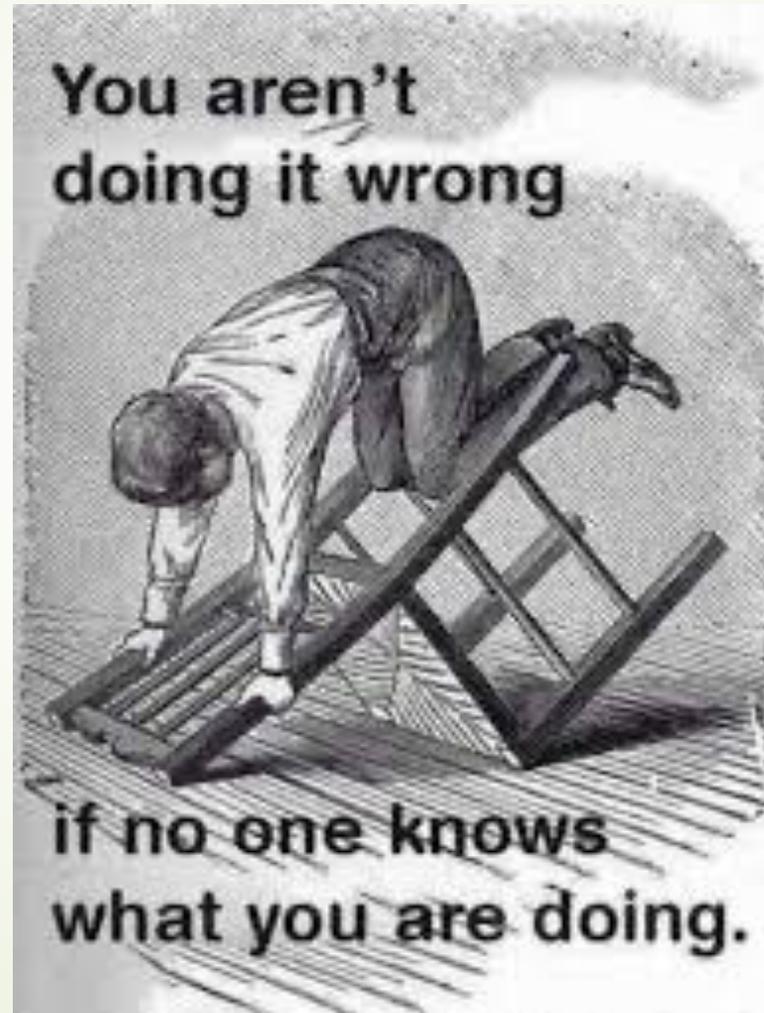
$$\Sigma F = ma = p'(t) = -G \Delta t$$
$$m \Delta v + u \Delta m + \Delta v \Delta m = -G \Delta t$$
$$m \frac{\Delta v}{\Delta t} + u \frac{\Delta m}{\Delta t} + \Delta v \frac{\Delta m}{\Delta t} = -G$$
$$\Delta t \rightarrow 0$$
$$m v'(t) + u m'(t) = -mg$$
$$v'(t) + g = -u \frac{m'(t)}{m} \quad || \int dt$$
$$v(t) + u \ln(m) = -gt + C$$
$$v(0) = 0 \Rightarrow C = u \ln(m_0)$$
$$v(t) = -gt + u \ln \frac{m_0}{m}$$

...IT'S ACTUALLY MORE DIFFICULT!

What is an example of a complicated Decision we all face?



Leadership, evolved



The paradigm Shift

The importance of the shift from “Closed and Knowing” to “Open and Learning”

Task Forces





The paradigm Shift

From Accountability to Responsibility

Campus
Mergers

ACCOUNTABILITY

VS

RESPONSIBILITY

(a subtle but very powerful difference)

The paradigm Shift

Rezoning

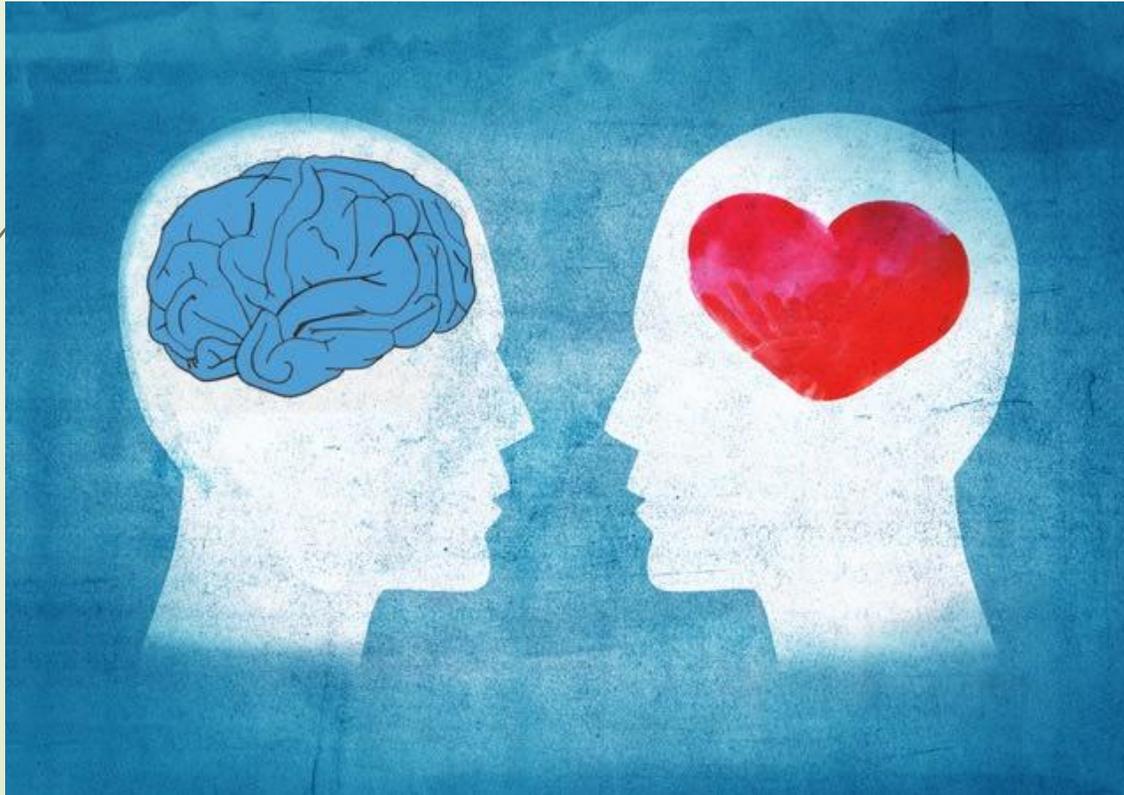
From Competent to Compassionate



**The Power of
COMPASSION**

The paradigm Shift

From open-minded to open-hearted



TRE

An open heart is an
open mind.

Dalai Lama XIV

The paradigm Shift

From excuse to explain



Administration
Reports

The paradigm Shift

Exchanges

From feedback to feed-forward

The difference between “who you are” and “Who you are becoming”



The paradigm Shift

From Commitment (rational or irrational) to Discipline (knowledge or instruction)



YET

Definition:

(Adv)

- 1.) a little word that grows the mindset**
- 2.) recommended to complete the phrase,**

I can't...

A photograph of a sign mounted on a white brick wall. The sign has a dark brown wooden frame and contains the text "BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO SUCK AT SOMETHING NEW." in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. Above the wall, there is a wooden railing and some green foliage. The sign is illuminated from below, casting a soft glow. The background of the image is a light green gradient with a dark red arrow pointing right and some faint, abstract lines on the left side.

**BE BRAVE ENOUGH
TO SUCK AT
SOMETHING NEW.**



From Thank you...

To Profound Gratitude...

Differentiating the Complex From the Complicated

A new language of leadership and governance, prompted by social communication and digital access to knowledge

BY QUINTIN D. SHEPHERD

The first time I came across the difference between the words *complex* and *complicated* was several years ago. I had just come through a difficult bond campaign in a fast-growing Iowa school district where I was superintendent. The \$80 million bond referendum in 2017 was voted down by the community.

I learned a lot from that experience — notably that whether a bond campaign will be successful or not mostly depends on a good plan and a good communication campaign. In the Iowa district, we had a communications campaign, which involved gathering input and holding community forums. I received some feedback from the community, but something in my DNA was telling me there was more than just traditional public communication at work.

When I subsequently encountered research literature about complex

versus complicated decisions, it was as though a bell went off in my head, signaling to me this is where we had messed up. I believe I've now changed in how I lead with my board of education as superintendent of a 14,000-student district in south Texas and in the language we use.

The language of leadership has been changing dramatically in our schools and in our communities. The ubiquitous presence of social media has a lot to do with that. Digital presence and digital voice are growing exponentially, and we must adapt our leadership to accommodate the social media beast.

Some leaders have tried to resist (at their own peril). If you have not noticed, let me state the obvious: The language of leadership evolved in the past decade in substantial (and positive) ways. Some of the words we have traditionally used are mostly gone from our vocabulary and have

been replaced by a new lexicon of leadership.

For the last several years, I have been intrigued with companies, corporations and school districts that have moved beyond the traditional communications campaigns and strategies and into the world of better governance and more robust leadership in this new era. As this new language of governance takes root, it brings a new language of leadership for all of us to embrace and master.

This change in language is important because the language we use tends to frame how we view the world. The traditional language always viewed the world in such a way that the leader needed to have the right answer. The new language of leadership comes with the recognition that leaders don't always hold the answers but must be able to create ownership around the conversation.

Seeing Differences

Today, I have come to realize the nature of board work is all about recognizing the difference between complex and complicated. In essence, complicated is anything that requires a technical expertise, typically takes years to master and usually has one right answer. Building an engine for a space shuttle is complicated work. I would not hire any of my superintendent colleagues to do this work because I'm fairly certain none know how to do it!

Creating a school district budget is complicated. Adopting a curriculum is complicated. Creating schedules for students and staff is complicated. We and our staff members should be doing this work.

What about the decision to close a school building? When is the right time to run a bond campaign? These two questions are not complicated, but they are complex. The complex almost never has one right answer, is filled with ambiguity and is ever-changing.

Mastering Lingo

Successful superintendents must master the leadership language to effectively differentiate between the complex and the complicated and then work with their boards and/or their staffs to handle each appropriately.

When I first started with my current school board two years ago, I explained I have a staff to deal with the complicated. These staff members are experts in their field and if they don't have the answers, they know how to find the answers.

I asked my board trustees to be my partners in insisting that only the complex issues come before us in a governance setting. In holding ourselves to this standard, we have standing task forces, made up of volunteers throughout our community to address the complex issues we are facing. My board trustees are masterful in reaching out into our community and encouraging people to participate on our task forces to ensure it's not the loudest voices that

get their way, but the most thoughtful idea that rises to the top.

Last year, one of our local newspaper reporters sat in to observe our task forces as we were talking about closing four schools and rezoning a large portion of our school district. About 150 task force members were meeting regularly in person, using a digital tool to solicit feedback from our community asynchronously and sharing it with others. The reporter described the experience first as watching the inside of a beehive. Some people would head in one direction, others would head in a different direction, still others would head online, and everyone would reconvene from time to time to share what they had learned.

A few weeks later, the reporter came back to me and indicated it wasn't a beehive so much as it was a social brain that was learning. I got goosebumps. When your community is described as a social brain making decisions based on what they think is



Caption to come

best for kids, great things start happening.

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I will close this part of the story by sharing the outcome. After almost eight months of work, it was members of the task force who elected to come to the school board meeting to make the final recommendation to close these four campuses and merge the students with other campuses and to rezone a portion of our district. Were there still community members who were upset? Of course.

Everyone in the community had the opportunity to know what the task forces were working on and there were countless avenues for conversation and input. The use of the digital tool was essential for those individuals who were not participants in the task forces. They could still share their thoughts and read the comments of others, and that helped them feel as if they too had a voice in the discussion.

Accessible Knowledge

This has been a paradigm shift for our board of trustees and has led to some of the most interesting conversations I have ever been a part of in



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Board governance is hard. In some ways, governance is harder than leadership. Board relations with the superintendent are critical, and I now advocate for all of us to embrace this new language of leadership. Board relations with the superintendent often break down when a superintendent tries to make the complex seem complicated and when we tend to make decisions on behalf of our board or our community because we think we have some privileged knowledge on a topic.

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It is not unlike the time our ancestors years ago first discovered fire. There were some who embraced an entirely new language around the applications of fire, and it changed their world (think food, farming, weapons and tools). There were others who presumably didn’t change and who eventually became extinct.

Our world continues to evolve and this is our charge to adopt a new language of leadership and governance to really lead forward in our communities. ■

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