

# High Quality Mistakes



Shawna Warren, Sandy McDonald  
Paul Corrigan, Dr. Andrea Holowka

Facilitated by Dr. Scott Morrison

# High Quality Mistakes

High quality mistakes are, “...approaches that didn’t work very well, but from which the (leaders) learned important lessons” (Danielson, 2016).



# Why High Quality Mistakes?

- System leaders often learn better from one another
- Sharing mistakes with colleagues is low-risk
- We humanize ourselves and demonstrate vulnerability
- We demonstrate our openness to growth
- Apology derived from the Latin apologia...“to explain”. Explaining why the mistake was made and what you learned from it separates impact from intent.

# What is Not a High Quality Mistake?

- If you don't recognize you made a mistake.
- If you recognize a mistake but learn nothing from it and don't change your behaviour.

# Shawna Warren and Sandy McDonald



Shawna Warren



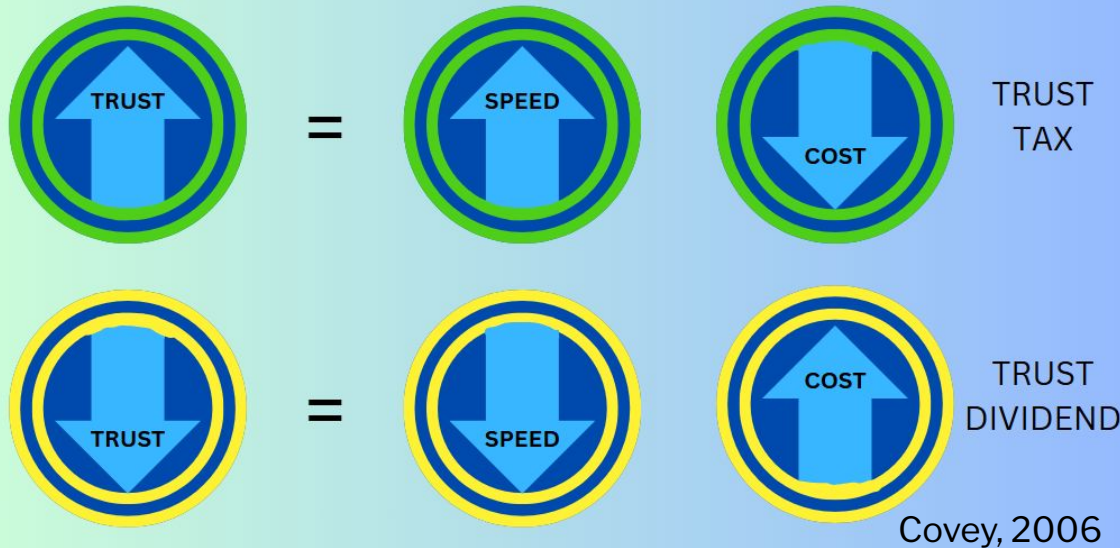
# Trust, Transparency and Communication are Foundational to Effective Governance (Walser, 2009)



What if trustees are so entrenched in mistrust from previous experiences that they cannot entrust the day-to-day management of the school division through the superintendent?

# The Trust Tax: The Hidden Cost, Paid in Frustration and Lost Momentum

## The Dollars and Cents of Trust



## Trust Tax:

- Constant perception of manipulation
- Constant friction & mistrust
- No buy-in for the importance of collective PD for governance
- Resistance to policy discussions
- Hyperfocus on operational matters



# What if I had a Mulligan?

**GOAL:** Transition from a **Trust Tax** environment to a **Trust Dividend**, where streamlined governance and mutual trust improve decision-making.

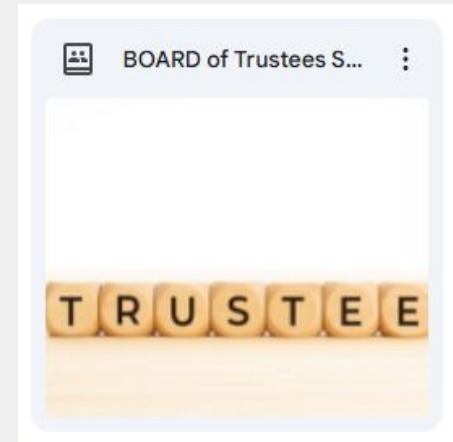


- Board PD - external consultant and legal from the beginning
- Promote full Board participation in ASBA & PSBAA governance training
- Layout clear expectations for governance and strategic planning
- Develop a structured Board Policy Review Schedule (starting October 2025)



## So now what?

- Empower the Trustees who have worked to learn their governance role, are “Team Sturgeon” and are running again
- A new Trustee Handbook aligned with ASBA best practices
- External consultants for Board PD on governance and legal risks
- Key governance materials always accessible via Google-based platform
- A standing CoW agenda for ongoing policy review and strategic planning discussions



Sandy McDonald



## What Does **Operations** Look Like through a **Governance** Lens?

- Addressing School Utilization
- School Calendar Development
- Board Engagement With School Admin



*Thank you CHAT GPT for the image!*

# What Does **Operations** Look Like through a **Governance** Lens?

GRANDE PRAIRIE PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION

<p><i>Policy Manual</i></p> <p>PAGE: 1 of 5</p>	<p>Policy 2 TITLE: Role of the Board APPROVED: May 26, 2009 AMENDED/REVIEWED: January 24, 2023</p>
-------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**S(2.2): Community Assurance** - Engage the community in a dialogue about Division programs, needs and desires.

**S(10.1): Property** - Acquire and dispose of land and buildings; ensure titles and services to or enforceable long term interests in land are in place prior to capital project construction.

**S(10.2): Attendance Boundaries** - Approve school attendance areas.

**S(10.4): School Year Calendar** - Approve the Division school-year calendar(s).



# Processing - 15 min

Individual - Enter an insight about Shawna or Sandy's talk [here](#).

Small Group - Discuss insights

Large Group - 3 tables report, time permitting

# Paul Corrigan and Dr. Andrea Holowka



Paul Corrigan





# Policy Committee

- The advice of those that went before you.

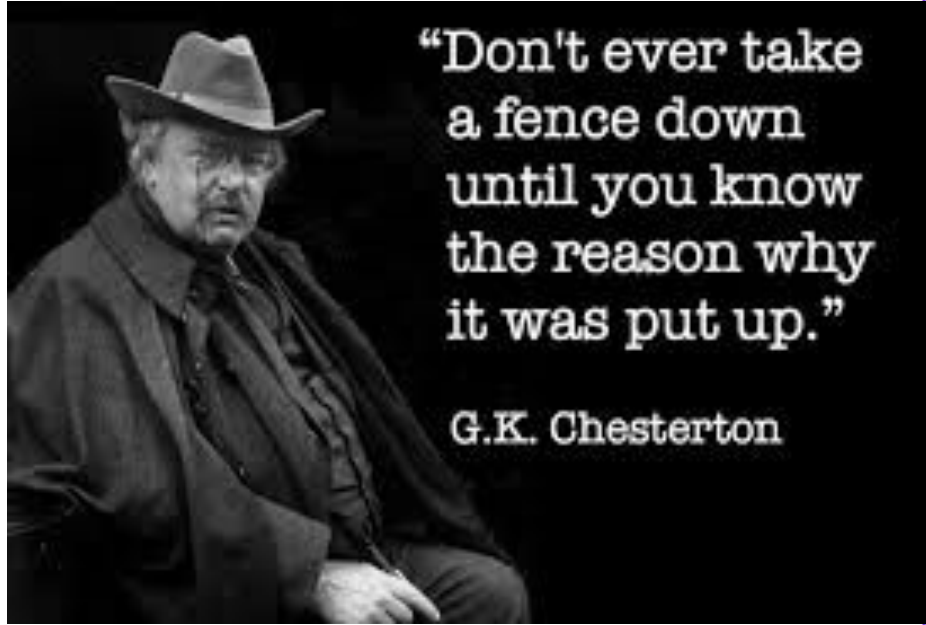


# Evaluation Time

- Keeping up with the Joneses







Dr. Andrea Holowka







**In the Superintendency...**

**There are policies.**

**There are procedures.**

**There are best practices.**

**But...**

**Context is Everything!**

# Learning About the Division & Building Relationships

- Seven communities
- 400 km across Alberta
- High contextual variability
- Initial investment across the division during my first year in:
  - building trust
  - understanding strengths
  - supporting needs





# Providing Support in Year 2



- Smallest community
- Remote and insular
- Rural hiring challenges
- Last minute resignation
- Successful at securing an additional teacher



# The Fallout...



How Would I Normally  
Address This?



How Will I Need to  
Address This HERE?







Changing the  
Relationship  
with the  
Local Trustee

# Adjusting Standard Human Resource Processes







Establishing  
**SUBSTANTIAL**  
Communication  
Pathways for  
Parents, Staff,  
and Community  
Members

# Personal Communication Pathways Continue



While Working with My Team  
to Resolve the Challenge

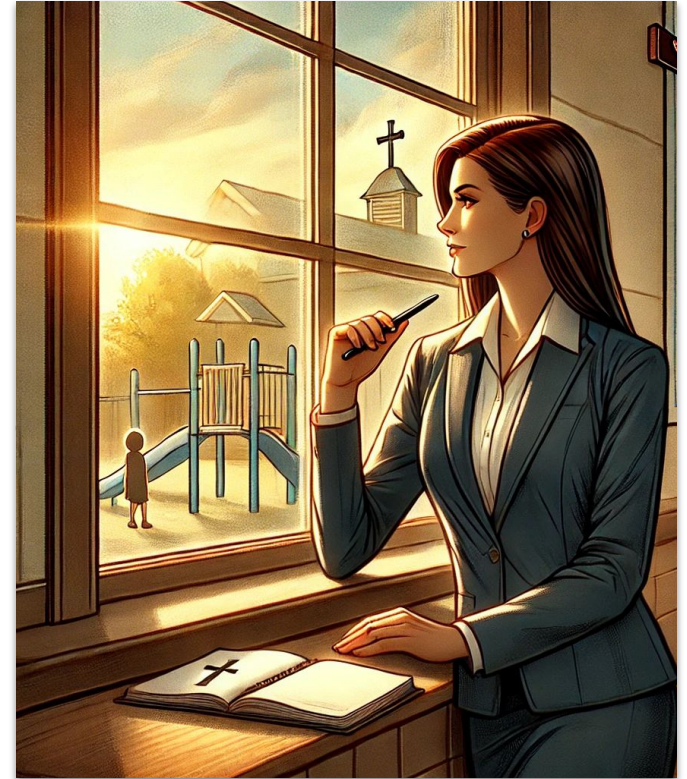


# Solving the Problem to Sustain Rural Catholic Education



While Recognizing that 100% Satisfaction is Impossible!

**So what did I  
learn?**





# Context is Everything!



- Each setting, interaction, relationship, and moment in time is unique.
- While your toolkit may expand, you will still encounter new challenges.
- Draw upon your team for solutions, while maintaining the integrity of your leadership and division.

# To Be Continued!



# Processing - 15 min

Individual - Enter an insight about Paul or Andrea's talk [here](#).

Small Group - Discuss insights

Large Group - 3 tables report, time permitting