



## Book Review: “The Speed to Trust” in moving districts forward

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There is little doubt that local boards, hampered by mandates and local politics, strive to regain the level of excellence in education Connecticut once held on a national level. At lightning speed, boards of education need to provide an education that is aligned with the real world and the work world.

Quickly accomplishing any change is the focus of the book, “The Speed of Trust”, written by Stephen M.R. Covey, son of the famed author of “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”. The book’s basic premise is that trust in relationships accelerates or decelerates results.

Incorporating personal and organizational assessments, tables describing behaviors of relationships and organizations at each level of trust, and a delightful array of quotes from leaders and philosophers throughout history, the book engages the reader to rethink trust: it’s not only honesty. This book offers an opportunity to bring about long-term results for boards and school systems when it is needed most. “The Speed of Trust” provides an easy read that answers the simple questions of why trust matters, what is trust, and how to establish, extend and restore smart trust to deliver fast, sustainable results.

Why trust matters boils down to the economics of trust, where trust exists, and the accounting of trust. The economics of trust is basic – a decrease in trust equals a decrease in speed and an increase in cost; conversely, an increase in trust equals an increase in speed and a decrease in cost. Trust becomes the hidden variable to increase or decrease results.

Since there is an element of trust in every relationship, family or organization, relationships have the potential to increase and decrease results based on interactions. Each person in a relationship has a “trust account” where each interaction causes a dividend or tax in the “account” based on whether the behavior was trustworthy or not.

These account charges will speed up or slow down

all the work interactions between the two people (i.e., additional or rechecking information) and their departments. Low-trust organizations display redundancy, bureaucracy, politics, disengagement, turnover and fraud.

High-trust organizations have increased value, accelerated growth, enhanced innovation, improved collaboration, stronger partnering and heightened loyalty – the descriptions leading to measurable results. The foundation laid for boards is that trust will move a district forward or potentially stall a district in making necessary changes in graduating students ready for a global, constantly changing world. The author also addresses the misnomer that trust is about character.

The majority of the book is devoted to defining “trust”, tools for and ways to establish trust, and five waves and principles of trust.

Covey describes trust as character (integrity and intent) and competence (capabilities and results). Covey uses a tree as an analogy for these four cores of credibility. The solid parts of the tree represent the components of character, with integrity (congruency – walking the talk, humility, and courage) being the roots and intent (motives, agendas and resulting behavior) as the trunk.

The changing parts of the tree are the components of competence, with capabilities (talents, attitude, skills, knowledge and style) being the branches and results (track record, performance and getting the right things done) being the leaves, flowers or fruits.

Then relationship trust is built through 13 behaviors: 1) Talk Straight, 2) Demonstrate Respect, 3) Create Transparency, 4) Right Wrongs, 5) Show Loyalty, 6) Deliver Results, 7) Get Better, 8) Confront Reality, 9) Clarify Expectations, 10) Practice Accountability, 11) Listen First, 12) Keep Commitments, and 13) Extend Trust.

The first five are behaviors of character, the middle five are behaviors of competence and the last three are behaviors of both. These behaviors matter and are personal to people.

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The quickest way to decrease trust is to violate a behavior of character. The quickest way to increase trust is to demonstrate competence. Trust moves in waves from self to relationships throughout organizations, by market brand (this would be a school's reputation), and finally reaching society. The principles of each wave are credibility, behavior, alignment, reputation and contribution. The final question addressed in Covey's book delves into how to extend smart trust and restore lost trust.

The ability to extend and restore trust clearly inspires trust; to extend smart trust requires judgment and to restore trust requires forgiveness. Smart trust is illustrated by a bell curve where the "sweet" spot is using judgment, giving too much trust is gullibility, and giving too little trust is suspicion.

Ronald Reagan's quote, "trust but verify", sums up extending smart trust. To restore lost trust requires the injured party to not be quick to judge where misunderstandings or misinterpretations usually surface and to be quick to forgive and cleanse the feelings of anger, vindictiveness, blaming, etc. The ability to extend and restore trust exemplifies the best of leadership.

Covey defines leadership as "the ability to deliver

sustainable results in a way that inspires trust with all stakeholders". So what do local school boards do now as leaders? As they have always done; set a vision, work toward student achievement through setting policy and providing resources with accountability and advocacy.

However, to move our districts forward quickly from whatever percentage of the industrial age model still exists within each district will require trust. Trust has the ability to transform our schools from the industrial age's factory model to the information age's learning centers where deciphering facts into knowledge and applying knowledge and skills walk hand in hand. And at the forefront of this ability to change rapidly is our ability to trust.

The question is no longer why trust matters, what trust is, or how trust is established, restored or extended. The question becomes – Do local boards of education wait for the federal or state government with their politics and bureaucracy to create the education system they think is needed, or do local boards improve collaboration and enhance innovation to accelerate growth and move with "The Speed of Trust" for our children?