



Barb Gee Consulting

**Organizational
Catalyst**

Services for School Districts

Barb Gee has 30 years of experience in all 3 industry sectors: for-profit, non-profit, and public.

In the for-profit sector, she has held senior management roles in technology companies, including HP, Silicon Graphics, and TiVo.

In the non-profit sector, she has held Board positions, served as an Interim Executive Director, and served as an Organizational Consultant in a wide variety of organizations including Huckleberry Youth Programs, Global Exchange, Institute for Community Health Outreach, and Peninsula Habitat for Humanity.

For the past 3 years, Barb has been consulting with the Oakland Unified School District, where she has been applying her skills to a variety of assignments focused on improving central services so that school leaders are supported and empowered to attend to the important mission of closing the achievement gap.

Barb's experience enables her to bring a unique set of skills to school districts:

- Strong organizational and change management skills
- Strong cross-departmental facilitation skills
- Strong project management skills
- Strong technology management skills
- Strong management training and coaching skills

She is particularly interested in the community schools model, and believes that effective integration of "Complementary Learning" services (non-classroom supports) is critical to ensuring that a student's experience with the school system results in a successful start in life.

Barb received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences, with honors, from the University of California at Berkeley (minor in Sociology). She received a Master's degree in Management from the MIT Sloan School of Management.

In addition, she has served on a variety of Boards and Commissions, including the San Mateo County Womens Commission, the San Francisco County Prop 63 Task Force (Mental Health Services Act), Global Exchange, and Joint Venture: Silicon Valley. Barb also served as a key faculty lead for the Washington Academy of Community Development (where she taught Organizational Management).



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SERVICES FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Cross-Departmental Initiatives Support

For large initiatives that require strong cross-departmental participation, Barb can facilitate development of a workplan, provide direct team leadership, or provide facilitation and organizational consulting to support the work of designated project managers. This is especially effective when there is a strong vision at the executive level that requires strong implementation leadership.

Strategic Plan Implementation Support

For school districts or departments that have completed a strategic plan, Barb can help turn that plan into a practical implementation workplan, backed up with project management support to make it happen.

Interim Leadership Services

For school districts experiencing leadership voids, Barb can take on leadership responsibilities on an interim basis, buying the school district time to engage in the important recruiting process needed to ensure good hires into critical leadership roles.

Implementation of Data Systems and Improvement-Focused Metrics

For school districts who aim to fortify their data-based decision making capacity and metrics-based performance management culture, Barb can bring all of the skills necessary to implement systems (technology and management) needed to implement this vision. She brings a unique set of technology, managerial, and process skills to bear on this complex endeavor.

Management Training and Coaching Services

For school districts that would like to increase management capacity, Barb can provide a wide range of management development services, including formal training and coaching on a variety of topics: management-by-objectives, delegation, effective supervisory meetings, performance management, effective recruiting, effective meetings, time management, project management.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

RESULTS

Cross-functional project management of mission-critical initiatives

Example

Played major role in time-critical turnaround of Summer Learning programs at OUSD. Facilitated major cross-functional initiative over a 4-month timeframe.

- Number of kids served jumped from 900 in previous year to 6500
- Error rate on pay checks reduced from 50% in previous year to 1-3% (and system put in place to address the errors that did occur)
- Test scores (using pre/post testing) increased for virtually all kids in the program

Oversight and project management of major technology initiatives (applications-focused, not infrastructure-focused)

Example

Oversaw PMO (Projects Management Office) responsible for 30+ strategic technology projects. During this tenure, performed a turnaround on major Data Warehouse project, critical to supporting the district's move towards data-based performance management.

- Completion of first phase of warehouse, resulting in on-time production of data critical to strategic planning retreat for Principals.
- Strengthened credibility with key funding partner.
- Facilitated re-negotiation of contracts with key vendors.

Re-structuring of departments needing to shift priorities

Example

Currently performing organizational assessment of After School program office, including workflow analysis, workflow automation, documentation of policies and procedures manual to institute structure and consistent practice, turning generic job descriptions into concrete expectations to assist with staff performance management.

Currently in process, should see tangible results in July 2009.

Education in Today's Urban Environment

Sunday, March 1, 2009

I've had a lifelong desire to help with our public education system. I grew up in San Francisco in the 60's and 70's, a time when California's public education system was touted as being the best in the country. My parents left their safe insular Chinatown community to move to an all-white neighborhood so that we could get access to the best public schools. I went to public schools all through undergraduate college, at a time when Affirmative Action wasn't a bad word. I was the first in my family to go to college, and was fortunate to have many mentors who supported me in my educational and career pursuits. I've paid a lot of taxes, gladly, for I got to participate in the American Dream.

I've personally lived through all kinds of school reform, enacted during my years as a student growing up: busing, elimination of tracking, elimination of "half grades", changes in teaching methods, etc. I grew up making friends of all races, classes, and backgrounds. As the system started to break down, and California started to shift funding priorities (from education to jails), I watched the public school system literally crumble behind me, so quickly that my younger siblings had less opportunity to get the kind of public education I had. I swore I would come back someday and do something about it. I want all kids to have access to the American Dream, as I had.

Three years ago, I had the opportunity to start consulting with the Oakland Unified School District, and have been working with them on a number of fronts since then: improving central office departments, troubleshooting operational problems, turning around learning programs. In addition, I've been in charge of big technology projects that aim to automate inefficiencies and provide data for better leadership decision-making. I've had the privilege of being able to visit school sites, talk to Principals, Teachers, and Staff—and learn about the reality of the urban school environment today.

School work is no longer just academic teaching work. In fact, I would argue that school work in today's society is primarily social work. If kids and their families don't receive the appropriate kinds of support at the appropriate times, then the child cannot learn. It's no longer as simple as providing a good breakfast to every kid every morning. Nowadays, kids have to navigate all kinds of transitions—divorce, community violence, parents in economic stress, lack of caring adults, loss of home—the list is long, and the needs are complex. No "improved" instructional practice is going to make a kid who has been to 10 funerals in 2 years learn math. No "improved" instructional practice is going to undo the damage done by the one grouchy adult (at school or in other places) that treats the kid as if they are not worthy.

And this observation doesn't only apply to the stereotypical low-income, minority communities in urban settings (note my use of the word stereotypical, as we often work from stereotypes that are damaging). Many years ago, there was a survey done with youth in Palo Alto, a very affluent city south of San Francisco. At the top of the list of issues articulated and ranked by the kids was loneliness and a sense of isolation. No amount of money, physical safety, and material comfort could satisfy their need for attention from caring adults and a caring community.

We need to break down the "service silos" that have been created in our school districts, our cities, our counties, and our states. Simplifying funding streams is one start. Facilitating cross functional work, and battling back political interests is another important step. Getting school boards elected that are healthy and focused on the work is another. Creating healthy union relationships so that they are partners in change, not obstacles to change, is also important. We've all allowed ourselves to fall into narrow and divisive approaches. Those of us in school reform get attached to "our way" being the "right way", and bicker while the kids suffer. Let's embrace all ways that do right by kids!

We need to stop the "adult third grade" stuff so we can focus on the REAL third grade.

Find a way to join in and help! Sign up to tutor, sign up to mentor, sign up to do facilities work. Be a reliable volunteer. You will be rewarded with the inner richness that only comes through selfless service.