

# Closing the Gaps Between What Sounds Good & *What Gets Done*



**JIM BEARDEN, CSP**

[JIM@JIMBEARDEN.COM](mailto:JIM@JIMBEARDEN.COM)  
512.306.1797  
FACEBOOK/JIM.BEARDEN.54

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[WWW.JIMBEARDEN.COM](http://WWW.JIMBEARDEN.COM)  
512.306.1805 FAX  
@JIMBEARDENSPEAK

## **Closing the Gaps** **Between What Sounds Good & *What Gets Done***

“ONE AFTERNOON IN JULY 1968 THE THEORETICAL PHASE OF MY MARINE TRAINING ENDED AND THE PRACTICAL PHASE BEGAN—WITH A BANG!”

THE RELENTLESS SEARCH FOR BETTER WAYS, JIM BEARDEN, 2006

### **They Came in the Evening** *Takeaways*

1. **Two variables that impact organizational success**
  - The hands we’re dealt
  - The choices we make about the hands we’re dealt
  
2. **The hands we’re dealt aren’t always great ones (understatement!)**
  - Political/budgetary decisions that impact district operations
  - The changing world of people, situations & circumstances encountered
  
3. **Things we know about bad hands (setbacks or adversity)**
  - They might make it more difficult for us to accomplish our mission
  - *They do not change our mission*
    - Marines do not get to choose the wars or battles they’re called to fight
    - Public school districts do not get to choose the children they’re called to educate
  
4. **Organizational responses to bad hands vary**
  - Some “hunker & hope”
  - Others look for ways to win, regardless of the hands they’re dealt

**THE HANDS WE’RE DEALT DO MATTER.**  
**THE CHOICES WE MAKE ABOUT THE HANDS WE’RE DEALT**  
***MATTER MORE!***

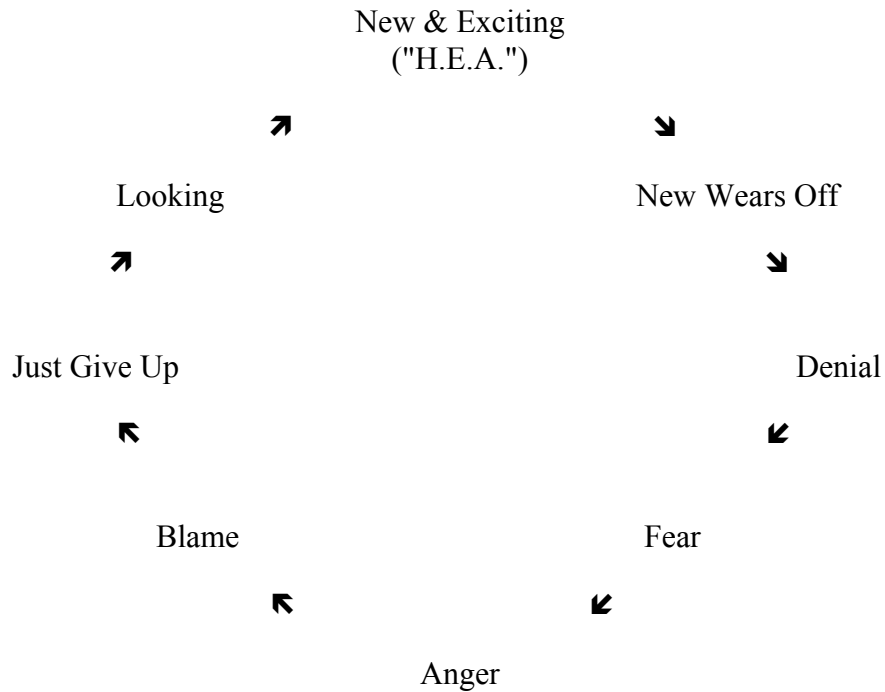
5. **Organizational responses to bad hands are driven by the behavior of people in leadership positions**

**WHAT THEY SEE FROM YOU**  
**IS WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO GET**  
***FROM THEM***

6. **In the real world, *Happily Ever After(s) Don’t Just Happen***
  - No “happily ever after” strategies, tactics or models
  - This widely-held illusion can be the kiss of death for the initiative required to achieve & sustain leadership effectiveness & organizational success

**Closing the Gaps**  
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**The "Happily Ever After Cycle"**



**Requirements for Achieving & Sustaining District Success**  
***Regardless of the Hands You're Dealt***

1. More emotional accountability & less "professional victimhood"
2. District cultures that reinforce & support behavior essential to district success ("Hero-friendly" cultures)
3. People who are able & willing to lead
  - ***Consciously create such cultures***
  - Expand & enhance employee engagement
  - Facilitate continuous process improvement (*The Relentless Search for Better Ways*)

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## EMOTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY & “PROFESSIONAL VICTIMHOOD” *A TALE OF TWO PERSPECTIVES*

### 1. Things we know

- The people, situations & circumstances that impact district success change
- District personnel always make choices about those changes
- Those choices are based more on their perspectives than on the changes themselves

### 2. Two perspectives in play

- Professional victimhood
- Emotional accountability

### Professional Victimhood

My feelings are the emotional consequences of the hands I'm dealt

Establish “rules” for what must or must not happen out there (heavy emotional attachment)

“Rules” will be broken  
*Setbacks are inevitable*

Blame, Wallow, Quit  
Wait, Wish, Hope

### Beliefs

### Choices Based on Beliefs

### In the Real World

### Choices Made About Setbacks

### Emotional Accountability

My feelings are the emotional consequences of the mental choices I make about those hands

Define the things I prefer to happen or not happen out there (less emotional attachment)

Preferences will not all be met  
*Setbacks are inevitable*

Get Over it!  
Get On With It!

**EMOTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**  
ACKNOWLEDGED OWNERSHIP OF THE CHOICES WE MAKE  
AND OF THE CONSEQUENCES THOSE CHOICES PRODUCE  
*ALL THE CHOICES & ALL THE CONSEQUENCES*

**EMOTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**  
NOT A TRAIT OR CHARACTERISTIC TO BE DEVELOPED;  
*A TRUTH TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED*

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**EMOTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**  
***FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE***

1. **During the next week I want you to really pay attention to how you're feeling, to your emotional states**
  
2. **When you catch yourself "bummed out" (experiencing negative feelings) I want you to complete the following 3 steps:**
  - Acknowledge/name the negative feelings you're experiencing, e.g., anger, frustration, etc.
  
  - Acknowledge/name the outside factor or factors that you associate with those feelings, the people, situations or circumstances that you have probably seen as having caused those feelings ("made you mad", "hurt your feelings", "disappointed you")
  
  - Then I want you to identify which of your "rules" has been violated, to consciously describe how that outside factor has deviated from what you had decided must or must not happen out there in order for you to have a "good day"
  
3. **Finally, I want you to notice what happens to the intensity and duration of your negative feelings when you consciously complete those 3 steps instead of unconsciously "feeding" those negative feelings**
  
4. **CONCLUSION – You most certainly can create better days (dramatically reduce the intensity & duration of the drama & negative feelings you associate with "bad days"), regardless of the hands you're dealt (the setbacks you encounter)**
  
5. **So you have the ability to create better days; you can do it**
  
6. **The question is, *are you willing?***

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**KEY LEADERSHIP ROLE**  
**CONSCIOUSLY CREATE “*HERO-FRIENDLY*” CULTURES**

**ATTITUDES & CULTURES**

\_\_\_\_\_ ARE TO \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT \_\_\_\_\_ ARE TO \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Attitudes and cultures are invisible but powerful**
  - You can't see people's attitudes or organizations' cultures
  - What you can—and do—see is evidence, and that evidence is behavior
2. **People's behavior reflects their attitudes; and their attitudes drive their behavior**
3. **District employees' behavior reflects the district's culture; and the district culture drives employees' behavior**

**DISTRICT CULTURE**

1. **“Professed” cultures**
  - Words & phrases that identify desired characteristics
    - Often found in foundational documents
    - Mission statements, core values, core beliefs
  - Those words & phrases have two things in common
    - They all sound good
    - *They may have little or no impact on employees' behavior*
2. **Actual cultures**
  - A composite of district employees' behavior
  - What gets noticed, honored and/or confronted
  - *Actual culture may differ from the cultures described in districts' foundational documents (there may be gaps between what sounds good & what gets done)*

## **Closing the Gaps** **Between What Sounds Good & *What Gets Done***

### **HERO-FRIENDLY CULTURES**

#### **1. Cultures that support “ownership behavior”**

#### **2. Ones in which people will:**

- Step up (do the right things/things in the best interest of the district and its constituents)
  
- Speak up (respectfully challenge the status quo & offer alternatives for consideration)
  
- Listen up (understand & consider alternatives offered by others)
  
- Risk making mistakes in pursuit of better ways (*cultures in which it is safer to try and fail than it is to hunker & hope*)

### **TWO APPROACHES TO CREATING CULTURE**

#### **1. Unconscious approach (the more common)**

- Leaders consciously identify & define the characteristics they want their cultures to express, e.g., words & phrases often found in mission statements, core values & core beliefs
  
- Little or no conscious effort made to bring those words & phrases to life

#### **2. Conscious approach (the road less traveled)**

- Leaders consciously identify & define the characteristics they want their cultures to express, e.g., words & phrases often found in mission statements, core values & core beliefs
  
- **Leaders take conscious steps to:**
  - Bring those words & phrases to life
  - Close the gaps between what sounds good & what gets done
  
- *Cultures that are created consciously will be far more likely to reinforce & support behavior essential to district success*

## **Closing the Gaps** **Between What Sounds Good & *What Gets Done***

### **LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR** ***FOR CONSCIOUSLY CREATING A HERO-FRIENDLY CULTURE***

- 1. Ensure that others understand what you expect from them**
  - Situation(s) in which employee behavior is most important
  - The types of behavior you expect in those situations
  - Three reasons people fail to meet leaders' expectations
    - They know what's expected but are unable to meet expectations
    - They know what's expected but are unwilling to meet expectations
    - They don't know understand the behavior that is expected
  - *Telling them what you expect is how you inform them*
  
- 2. Identify & eliminate barriers to those behaviors**
  - Reasons employees may be unwilling to do the things you expect
  - Real and perceived barriers
  - The things you and other organizational leaders can do to eliminate those barriers
  
- 3. Model that behavior**
  - Using the same or similar situation(s)
  - Demonstrate for them the behavior that is expected from them
  - *Showing them what that behavior looks like is how you lead them*
  
- 4. Measure their performance using those expectations**
  - What gets measured gets done
  - Reinforces the importance you place on that behavior
  
- 5. Honor efforts & progress toward meeting your expectations**
  - Acknowledge their effort, progress, successes, mistakes & lessons
  - Mistakes can be signs of progress (focus more on lessons than on mistakes)
  - *Don't blow smoke!*
  
- 6. Confront unwillingness/bad faith**
  - Most people will make good-faith effort to meet your reasonable expectations – *Some Won't*
  - You do a disservice to those who will by tolerating/ignoring those who won't – *So Don't*
  - *Confrontations are done as a means of restoring, not punishing*



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### **CONSCIOUSLY CREATING CULTURE** **THEORY TO PRACTICE**

- 1. Identify some words that you would use to describe characteristics of a culture you would like to have in your district. Here are some examples:**
  - Cooperative (teamwork)
  - Collaborative
  - Innovative
  - Agile
  
- 2. Next, identify some situations in which those cultural characteristics would be most important to your district's success. Here are some examples:**
  - Situations in which district employee behavior has direct or indirect impact on student achievement
  
  - Situations in which district employee behavior has direct or indirect impact on other district employees' job satisfaction and their ability to achieve their objectives
  
  - Situations in which district employee behavior has direct or indirect impact on district constituents' perceptions of your district
  
- 3. Finally, describe the employee behavior you would look for in that situation, the behavior you would use to determine that the word that sounded good was something that was getting done**

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**CONSCIOUSLY CREATING CULTURE**  
**THEORY TO PRACTICE**

**The word:**

**The situation:**

**The behavior:**

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**CONSCIOUSLY CREATING CULTURE**  
**THEORY TO PRACTICE**

**The word:**

**The situation:**

**The behavior:**

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**HOW DISTRICT SUCCESS IS ACHIEVED & SUSTAINED**  
***IN THE REAL WORLD***

**1. Progressively**

- Cultures aren't formed—or changed—overnight
- Changing district cultures & performance are processes, not events
- *Leaders must persevere beyond the points at which the new wears off the process*

**2. A little theory & lots of effort**

- Focus, commitment & agility all sound good
- In the absence of effective leadership, they'll never be anything more than words
- *Effective leaders close the gaps between what sounds good & what gets done*

**3. Some Success; Some Failure**

- If the gaps between your current culture & the one you desire are wide, you can be sure that you will experience failures in your attempts to close those gaps
- *In the real world, setbacks are \_\_\_\_\_*

**SUCCESS & FAILURE WILL CHARACTERIZE  
YOUR EFFORTS TO CREATE A HERO-FRIENDLY CULTURE.  
YOUR COMMITMENT TO DOING SO IS BEST MEASURED  
BY YOUR RESPONSES TO YOUR FAILURES**

**4. From the inside out**

- The hands you're dealt do matter
- *The choices you make about the hands you're dealt matter more*

**THE MORNING AFTER ON HILL 512**  
***GET OVER IT & GET ON WITH IT***

**IN THE ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP,  
DISTRICT SUCCESS WILL BE A SITUATIONAL PHENOMENON,  
*AT BEST!***