

SIDES Professional Book Club Notes
Friday, Feb. 17/17

Books: Black Box Thinking by Mathew Syed
Let My People Go Surfing by Yvon Chouinard

- Big question as to what is quality for us at SIDES? Surfing book is about the choices he made while setting up Patagonia. Had to reconcile his ethics in connection to making profits.
- What are we about?
- What are we passionate about?
- As leaders we are part of the problem, and need to be part of the solution as well.
- Are schools businesses as well? As the educational world evolves.
- These are our morals – if we set them out – how do we look at these in terms of school vision and school plans?
- Parkland filtered everything through their vision, but had gatekeepers to keep people going back to this idea and re-visiting the vision.
- What is our vision at SIDES? Is this something we need to refine again?
- How can we guide our decisions through this process?

- We have some decisions that we keep looking at – academic integrity, orientation courses.
- Course development has been great with a common vision.
- We need to keep defining what quality is for us, and this needs to be communicated.
- What does our service model look like?
- Patagonia was ahead of its time and had to make some hard decisions and stick to them.
- Had everyone buy in and feel they were part of the decision making process.
- Do we know who our customers are? Like Patagonia.
- Who are we tailoring our programs for? We can't please everyone.
- Orientation courses – a good start.
- Also important to look at the whole person/employee.
- We have become a school of first choice and last resort.

- The Black Box looked at hidden failures and different ways of dealing with failures, most notably doctors versus pilots. Doctors don't look at failures at ways to learn (generally) while pilots dissect an event and learn from it.
- It's hard to admit when something isn't working and learn from it.
- For example, students who don't finish the OC – why? Was it self-selected? Something in the OC? Failed it?
- We should all be looking at our mistakes.
- But it's also hard not to have a preconceived idea of what the solution is.
- We need collaboration, humility, examination of our practise.
- However, we had our black box moment when the audit a number of years ago was a big mess, we learned, moved forward and made the systems stronger. SSIS, OC.
- Really good discussion about both books.
- Interesting connections made.