



The Power of Persuasion: January 2012 Fellowship Training

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I never thought it would take me 22 hours to travel by plane from Sacramento, CA to Washington, D.C., but on Jan. 23, I was proven wrong. After a delayed flight due to mechanical issues, a missed connection in Phoenix, being rerouted through Dallas, and a canceled connection to D.C., I finally arrived at the USGBC offices for the Center for Green Schools Fellowship training. My problem-free air travel record is now officially over, but I miraculously arrived to the training a mere two hours late.

As [Green School Fellows](#), Phoebe and I are provided with two professional development trainings per year by the Center. The first training was held in June during our first week with USGBC. [Anisa, the fellowship manager](#), gathered a great group of sustainability directors and energy managers from across the country to help us understand some of the challenges we may see while working within our districts. This training was now focused on clearly communicating our message by utilizing different tools.

The first training session was presented by [Linda Booth Sweeney](#) about “applied systems thinking” that will enable us to make better decisions, while clearly relaying complicated messages about our work. Linda explained that oftentimes, an event and the process are seen as two different things; however, it is critical to examine the entire process that resulted in a specific outcome. There are very interesting studies and work related to systems thinking that will help when trying to reach a goal.

The next two days of our training was focused on communication, messaging and storytelling. We started out talking about storytelling with [Pat Lane](#) from the Center team. Pat explained how the power of storytelling can get people to move from agreement to action. We worked to develop our own personal stories about why we were Fellows and why we are passionate about our work.

Later that day, Anisa, Phoebe and I visited the [UTC office](#) in D.C. to speak with company representatives and to tour their “Innovation Center.” I had always known that UTC’s subsidiary companies where industry leaders with great products, but I had no idea the level of new technologies they were developing. It was eye opening to learn about the fire life safety work, elevator technology, energy conserving HVAC equipment and aircraft engine design work that each company has been advancing. Phoebe and I were also able to test our helicopter flying skills in their simulator. I really enjoyed learning more about the variety of technology advances from UTC companies.

We were then lucky enough to spend the final hours of the day with [Judith Webb](#), the senior vice president for marketing and communication at USGBC, for some one-on-one communications advice and tips on how to “speak green.” She helped us brainstorm great ideas to showcase the amazing work happening in our districts.

Thursday was all about the “Power of Persuasion” with [Harrison Monarth](#), an author and speech coach for many prominent CEOs and political figures. All of our conversations with Harrison were focused on how to create trust and confidence with those whom you interact. We talked about first impressions, personal bias effect on persuasion, building relationships, personal branding and the power of storytelling. For me, the best lessons of the day were related to the personal brand and storytelling. I gained a better understanding of how my personal brand can influence other’s perception of the district I represent, and their ability to engage in future conversations and ultimately take action.

On the last day of our training, Anisa was kind enough to give Phoebe and I time to de-brief and think about all of wonderful new tools that we learned about the past week. We used the day to reflect on our first seven months and identify important events that we learned from that would help us moving forward. This will help us identify big moments or “headlines” coming up for the rest of the school year.

The week long training was very helpful for me as I move forward at SCUSD. I am meeting new people daily and I feel that I can use some of the new information to gather support and inspire action. With my lessons learned, I am confident that I can begin making a better case for green schools.



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