



# MJC Reflection

July 11, 2013

My summer reading has included numerous research articles on shared governance. The articles were written from a variety of perspectives and included a wide array of institutions. In a nutshell, shared governance refers to the shared responsibility of administration and faculty for decisions regarding the policy, budget, and mission of the college. Two of the recommendations from the Accrediting Commission to Modesto Junior College specifically address participatory governance, planning, and roles in the process. Tremendous effort from all constituent groups has brought the college to full implementation of an expanded participatory governance structure that supports decision making. Reading the articles provided opportunity to reflect on MJC's participatory governance journey which I attempted to share with College Council on Tuesday. Unfortunately, we were out of time and cool air so we adjourned. For any interested, here are my thoughts-

Participatory governance does not just happen. My father plays piano, I play piano, and I imagined that one of my sons would play piano and the other, cello. My limited ability to play was not inherited, instead was developed through lessons, practice, and sheer determination. I am not a natural musician gifted with the ability to produce what I hear. I am a technician who can read music with just enough technical knowledge to translate what is on the page into keystrokes. I started my boys early with piano lessons hoping that the introduction at a very young age would make it a more natural fit for them. At ages 4 and 5, they had a strong opposition to continuing piano. I relented and let them have a break, thinking I was saying good-bye to my hope of musicians. After a year and a half of persistent begging from the youngest to play drums (not exactly the cello) I agreed to drum lessons (45 miles away) and made his brother also choose an instrument. His first choice was the didgeridoo (no kidding), but that was not an option in our area so he eventually settled on another native instrument, guitar.

Sam sat down at the drums and could play. Yes, he needed work to build his internal clock and develop technique, but he was a natural. His favorite is speed metal because of the complexity and difficulty and volume! Cameron faced the guitar just as I faced the piano. He set his timer for practice each day and forced the notes from the guitar. We went to lessons each week for three years and while Cameron's skill improved, it was merely sound replicating the notes on the page, it was not music. Then, he discovered classic rock and the twanging notes became music. For the next five years, I could count on hearing him play through his favorites each day.

MJC has built a structure to support decision making that is inclusive and has room for varying perspectives. Some joined the governance councils with natural ability to work collaboratively toward a common goal, others took up this new challenge with determination despite it being new and potentially uncomfortable. Purposeful intent and determination has moved our institution to a new level of participatory decision



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making. Together, practice has brought the councils to the point of music. Are we a fine-tuned symphony? No, but the sound has a melody and I am so happy to be part of the band.

*I never have any problem getting enthusiastic with a good song and good band.*

Waylon Jennings