

University at Albany, State University of New York

Scholars Archive

Presentations

Scholarship

2016

Panel Presentation on the Power Dialog

Mary Ellen Mallia

University at Albany, State University of New York, mmallia@albany.edu

John Pumilio

Colgate University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/sust_pres



Part of the [Sustainability Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mallia, Mary Ellen and Pumilio, John, "Panel Presentation on the Power Dialog" (2016). *Presentations*. 14. https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/sust_pres/14

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarship at Scholars Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Archive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@albany.edu.

Power Dialog

- The Power Dialog provided a multi-state, multi-campus week of climate education that linked climate education to real time policy events.
- The week of April 4th, 2016, thousands of students from more than fifty colleges and universities in twenty state capitals participated in the Power Dialog, a coordinated effort to teach students about U.S. climate policy and the EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP).

How to get campuses engaged

- Required a national, actionable policy event coordinated at the state level and a federal mandate for states to engage with the public to develop power plant carbon emission regulations

Heath and Heath model for behavioral change

- First, “focus the rider”: create a clear, effective goal for participants.
- Second, “motivate the elephant”: in this case, create turnout.
- Third, “smooth the path”: offer a relatively easy template for participation.
- In short, participation to be perceived as (1) effective, (2) exciting, and (3) relatively easy.

National effort

- The national initiative was conceived, organized and coordinated by a team at the Center for Environmental Policy at Bard College.
- The Bard organizers recruited university-based teams to host the state capital dialogs, some headed up by students, others by faculty, and others by university staff.
- To help students prepare for their state dialogs, the national project provided educational resources provide web-based resources and sponsored a series of six webinars in the early spring with leading climate experts on a broad range of topics from public health to interstate and international cooperation. Individual state groups crafted their own educational materials as well.

Follow the Heath model

- In terms of focus, the Power Dialog offered educators a straightforward opportunity to engage their students directly with top state officials who were in turn involved in high-level, live policy decision-making
- Adding to the motivation was students' knowledge that they were participating in a national event that included dialogs in multiple state capitals.
- Finally, the Power Dialog created a relatively easy template for participation.

Oh no!

- In February 2016, Power Dialog state coordinators had stepped forward in thirty states, with interest expressed in another half dozen.
- However, the Power Dialog model was challenged on February 9, 2016 when the Supreme Court placed a surprising stay on the CPP.
- Many Republican administrations stopped officials from CPP planning, including public outreach

The show must go on..

- In spite of these challenges, Power Dialogs successfully convened in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington

We've got the most!

- Four states had participation from 200 students or more: 300 in New York, 230 in Pennsylvania, 225 in Virginia, and 200 in Minnesota through representation of, six to fifteen colleges and universities respectively

Virginia

- In Virginia, the sustainability directors at University of Richmond (UR) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) convened and championed a series of conference calls for representatives of twelve different campuses. Linked by existing sustainability and environmental studies networks, this group immediately moved towards a collaborative model of a shared mission and vision for the event with a series of facilitated group discussions. The remainder of the campuses cooperated through information sharing as they developed their own campus-specific activities.

Pennsylvania

- Faculty and staff of Dickinson College's Center for Sustainability Education leveraged their membership in the Pennsylvania Environmental Resource Consortium (PERC) to reach out to faculty from approximately 50 colleges and universities to convene a planning group. PERC member schools have a robust history of collaboration on sustainability education, campus operations and engagement.

State Planning

- The New York Power Dialog was centered at the University at Albany where a steering committee was formed.
- A champion in the Political Science Department at the University at Albany created a course around the Power Dialog and teamed up with an Environmental Economics professor. They served as the academic anchors.
- Internal sustainability networks proved effective in garnering on-campus involvement and administrative support. The campus then formed a collaborative team who created and coordinated three distinct activities: a juried poster session, student led workshops and the evening dialog.

State Planning

- To leverage statewide participation, committee members accessed the New York Coalition for Sustainability in Higher Education and the Environmental Consortium for Colleges and Universities to recruit participation in the event, either in person or virtually via a webcast of the evening presentation.
- An adjunct faculty member with contacts in the Governor's office was able to solicit participation by high-level state officials.
- Fortunately, the Power Dialog dovetailed nicely with Governor Cuomo's and the Public Service Commission's work in creating a new energy vision for the state (REV) which calls for an aggressive implementation of renewable energy. As a result, the Energy Czar for the state who serves on the Governor's Executive Cabinet, and a high ranking DEC official agreed to take part.
- In total, 10 campuses attended the day's events and another 4 viewed the dialog piece online.

Student Involvement

- Students helped to lead program implementation and coordination. On event day, student moderators oversaw the evening dialogue, introduced speakers, organized student representatives, and coordinated audience questions.
- Over 20 student posters were presented followed by 6 student-led workshops on topics ranging from “What is the Clean Power Plan?” to “Intro to Environmental Advocacy.”
- Participating students from the various campuses submitted questions for the state officials. Campuses selected one student to sit on the dais to pose their inquiries.
- A student from the Maldives—a low-lying island nation facing rising sea levels—opened the event by asking how states could contribute direct assistance towards developing renewable energy technologies and adaptation measures in other countries. This moment connected state-level policy in the U.S. to climate effects around the world.

Virtual reality

- While the Power Dialog was best experienced in person, the evening presentation was webcasted out to the state
- 4 campuses choose to view this on-line and connect to campus events
- Syracuse University had their student create digital sketchbooks to dialog on energy related projects. It was a new format, using tablets and laptops to present in-process student projects so that they could have 1 to 1 interactions/discussions/feedback with guests

Feedback

- Student responses and feedback across the Power Dialogs describe here indicate the depth to which this opportunity resonated with student interests and priorities.
- “For the power dialog, I think all the workshops were helpful in focusing on a more specified topic and allowed students to learn more detail of a particular area.”
- “We should organize these type of power dialog workshops and poster sessions every semester (if possible) to raise awareness about climate change to keep the environment sustainable.”
- “I liked how everything was done. It has both a visual and discussion style aspect to it, I believe that helps more people grasp the topic and learn more.”

Next?

- How might NYS schools engage with one another in a similar manner, combining engagement and academics?
- What are some topics/opportunities?