Using A Systems Approach to Continuous Improvement in the CTE Classroom

The Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District (Our Story)

• Strategic Advantages
  o Located on the I-35 and I-10 Corridor
  o Tenured, experienced, loyal staff
  o Strong, sustained academic performance and reputation in the San Antonio Area
  o Student Growth
  o Our attendance rate is good and our drop-out rate is low.

• Challenges
  o Limited or Reduced State Funding
  o Under-representation of Industrial Growth
  o Facility Capacity
  o High Technology Expectations
  o Achieving ever-increasing NCLB (AYP) standards
  o Continuous improvement requires continuous improvement

• First Steps are Baby Steps
  o What is the CTE Role in District-wide Performance Excellence?
  o What does this look like in the CTE classroom?
  o How do we participate in setting the stage district-wide & define a systems approach to continuous improvement?
  o How do we clarify and communicate, to our CTE staff, district goals and learning requirements (arrows aligning)?

STEP ONE – Define Performance Excellence (This was an entire spring and summer of professional development)

• That the work, “processes”, of the district is patterned after Baldrige Criteria
  http://www.nist.gov/baldrige
• That all district systems and sub-systems are aligned to the district’s priorities and goals. (all the arrows are pointing in the same directions)
• That there is a clear understanding that reaching high achievement is more than working harder and that success is a result of how well all the parts of the organizational systems work together.
• That the work of improving the organization as a system begins with an honest look at and clear understanding of the current capacity for performance excellence and how each sub-system can contribute to the needed improvement.
• That district leadership is not afraid to say that something needs to be changed and corrected
• That Campus, Departments, and even classrooms each had clearly understood missions and goals that aligned with the districts mission and goals. That all stakeholders could buy in to these goals
• That improvement is based on customer needs. In the case of school systems, customers “pay” with: Attention (students); efficiency and loyalty (employees; or support and positive engagement (parents).

THE PARADIGM SHIFT (When you are already doing well, it’s harder to want to make changes)

• How do we move from “Random Acts of Excellence” to a Systems Approach for Performance Excellence?
• How do we get all the arrows pointed in the same direction?
• How do we all start talking the same language?
• ...and don’t forget about Jim Collin’s Good to Great and Covey’s Principle Leadership

STEP TWO – Define A System (Who are we responsible to? Who are our customers?)

• When we look at the classroom as a system of interrelated and interdependent parts with the focus on learning, we say we’re using a systems approach.
• A systems approach means we are getting better and we know how and why we are getting better (All the arrows are pointed in the same directions. We are all making the same barbell and we know what a quality barbell looks like before we begin to make it)
• Performance excellence is based upon the following assumptions...
• People want to do the right thing and want to be successful.
• 95% of the problems workers face are the result of the system, and leadership has a responsibility to fix the system.
Fixing one part of the system is necessary but not sufficient to achieve **performance excellence**

**STEP THREE – Set Clear Goals and Priorities (above the line and below the line)**

- We wanted to ensure that all CTE program goals and priorities were in support of the SCUC district goals and priorities:
  - **A Systems Approach** is a Practical Way of Getting Better
  - Set and Communicate Clear Directions for the Class and for Students
  - Students actively participated in setting priorities
  - Class Goals and Priorities support campus and district

**STEP FOUR – Assess, Monitor and Adjust**

- Plan the Work – Work the Plan - and be honest with yourself about what is and is not working. If it is not working, change it.
- In our excitement to begin the process, we rushed it. As a district, we needed to set better timelines for professional development and implementation. So last fall, based on campus feedback, we took a step back and started that process. Now we are moving forward again in a more strategic, monitored way with better guidelines, benchmarks and directions
    - Student charts
    - Data Walls
    - Plus /Deltas
    - Student Data Folders
    - HOTS

**PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE IS A ROCKY JOURNEY…and there is no Finish Line.**

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