



ImpaQT: Leadership Training for Organizational Excellence

by Bob Ewy

The Leadership Training for Organizational Excellence has been developed for school district leaders who have completed the ImpaQT Training for the District or who are inspired by Baldrige and ready to move to the next level. School districts that believe a culture of organizational excellence is the only goal worth pursuing would especially benefit from this ImpaQT course. By participating in this advanced education leader coaching experience, school district leaders can anticipate greatly improved results, including increased student achievement, efforts toward closing the student achievement gap, staff and stakeholder satisfaction, process efficiencies and effectiveness, and overall system performance.

The explanations and examples in this ImpaQT course provide a proven path to organizational excellence. It does not mean that participants from school districts need to be at a certain level of performance before the ideas, examples and materials will work. It means that wherever you are—whatever the level—this ImpaQT course, if applied as recommended, will increase organizational performance to the point of excellence as defined by the Baldrige criteria, the worldwide standard of organizational excellence.

All materials and examples have been field tested during a 10-year period with rural, suburban and large urban school districts. After one school district optimized the use of this material, it won the highest state quality award and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Other school districts that were not interested in the award have also attained equal levels of performance excellence.

The audience for this program is senior leaders within a school district, which includes board of education members, superintendent and central office assistant superintendents, area assistant superintendents and directors. It could include principals if they are part of the district's senior leadership, and it could also include union leadership.

Becoming systems thinkers

The underlying premise of the explanations and examples in these materials is that senior leaders must be systems thinkers if their school districts are to achieve organizational excellence. These materials and examples describe what that means and how to attain it. This is not to say this goal is easy. If it were, more organizations would be excellent, and few are. It is to say that this goal is the only goal worth pursuing because it impacts the lives of students in serious and profound ways.

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This is not a training program in the traditional sense. It should be referred to as an education leader coaching experience. The emphasis for participants is to create opportunities to critique current practices and refine thinking and approaches to practices that accelerate the district's journey to organizational excellence. This is also not quality tools training, although the appropriate application of advanced quality tools is explained.

This ImpaQT education leader coaching experience is designed to address what it means to master the three skill sets of alignment/integration, deployment and improvement.

The coaching experience has four overall objectives:

- Participants will be able to differentiate the organizational components (alignment/integration, deployment and improvement) that create a comprehensive, relevant, focused and linked system that has been proven to result in the highest levels of school district performance excellence.
- Participants will review the verified management practices of high-performing school districts and decide which practices are applicable to their school districts.
- Participants will refine the components (alignment/integration, deployment and improvement) that lead to the achievement of organizational goals and to high levels of student, parent and staff satisfaction.
- Participants will revise their list of leadership skills that are most needed if their school districts are to improve student outcomes, satisfy stakeholders and achieve organizational performance excellence.

This advanced education leader coaching experience begins by addressing how to develop or analyze a strategic plan, strategy map, balanced scorecard and district systems map—all necessary components in aligning an organization. The book *Stakeholder-Driven Strategic Planning in Education* (www.asq.org/quality-press/display-item/index.pl?item=H1351) is used as the learning material for the workshop. Best practices (benchmarks) and multiple examples of alignment and deployment activities are part of the material and discussions in this part of the coaching experience. Specific attention is devoted to how senior leaders monitor balanced scorecard measures using a scorecard review and how to assure that data overload does not occur.



Once aligned, the coaching course addresses how to deploy the strategic plan, strategy map, balanced scorecard and district systems map. Participants are provided with lists and examples to frame discussions about what deployment activities are needed so that everyone in the school district knows their roles and responsibilities. That way, the mission, vision and student learning targets can be achieved. Considerable attention is paid to deploying the system that has the greatest affect on student achievement and instruction.

The emphasis in this part of the coaching process is the use of plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle for managing change. Participants should understand and use PDSA already so this section is about using PDSA on the senior leader level as a way to manage change. PDSA is used as a planning format with a consistent application across the district departments and schools. PDSA as a one-page plan for improvement is recommended.

Super tools

The second emphasis during this part of the coaching process is the suggested simplification of change management through the use of what we will call the three quality super tools. Inappropriately or inaccurately using quality tools makes it difficult to manage a PDSA process. Here, we suggest the use of the three quality super tools as a way to address this problem for most of the improvement issues a school district faces. There is nothing new about the tools—everyone will know them—it's just the way they are applied within the PDSA improvement process.

Improving processes is the key to educational improvement. Unfortunately, except for a few isolated instances, the gap in understanding how to manage and improve processes is universal in education. It is the root cause of most of the failures of educational improvement efforts.

The coaching course focuses on the two major tools that help process owners understand how to manage and improve processes. The first is process maps or flowcharts, which are visual descriptions of each step in the process and how they link together. The second major tool necessary to understand process improvement is statistical process control (SPC). The focus of the workshop is on how to analyze SPC data to make improvement decisions. A statistical background is not necessary to fully understand SPC. Define, measure, analyze, improve and control is also introduced as an approach to solving difficult process problems. The material for this part of the coaching course is the book *Process Management in*



Education: Designing, Measuring, Deploying, and Improving Educational Processes.

If you focus on the issues of alignment/integration, deployment and improvement in ways this ImpaQT coaching course describes, your school district will create a culture of excellence. Your school district is currently aligned to get the results it is getting. If you are not 100% satisfied with those results, then you have systems within your school district that are not aligned, integrated, deployed or improved. The ImpaQT Leadership Training for Organizational Excellence is specifically designed to provide district senior leaders with the concepts, understanding, skills, examples and tools to make a culture of performance excellence a reality.

Bob Ewy is a consultant in strategic planning, continuous improvement and process management, assisting school districts in creating exceptional learning environments for students and satisfying professional working environments for staff. Ewy, an ASQ member, co-authored [Charting Your Course: Lessons Learned During the Journey Toward Performance Excellence](#), a Quality Press publication. He has written or contributed to articles about data warehousing and analysis, and the principles and practices of continuous improvement.