

### Editor's Note: Raising the Bar

By Megan Schmidt, editor



The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the only formal recognition of performance excellence given to public and private U.S. organizations by the president of the United States. But the Baldrige program is not really about the award. In education specifically, it's about a commitment that must have the support of everyone in a school or district to go above and beyond the minimum state and federal standards to achieve results like these:

- High school graduation rate: 97.3%.
- Graduates who continue their education at a two or four-year college: 91.9%.
- Parent satisfaction with education quality: 93.8%.
- Districtwide action items completed in one year: 98%.
- Staff satisfaction with engagement and involvement: 91.6%.

Yes, these are real results achieved by a real school district. The Pewaukee School District (PSD) in Wisconsin, the focus of this month's exclusive video, has many success stories to share after implementing the Baldrige criteria.

PSD has used the Baldrige criteria to improve for years and documented their experiences and results at different milestones with ASQ through Knowledge Center case studies and *Education Brief*

articles. PSD is one of two organizations recognized for performance excellence in 2013 (the other is Sutter Davis Hospital in Davis, CA).

I met PSD Superintendent JoAnn Sternke at the National Quality Education Conference (NQEC) in Milwaukee last November. Just days before her keynote speech at NQEC, JoAnn received the Baldrige news. JoAnn, who is a dedicated and passionate educator, provided insight into the challenges and rewards of using Baldrige and a preview of PSD's next steps in an exclusive interview that took place at NQEC.

Although it's about more than recognition, PSD will receive a trophy at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Quest for Excellence Conference and Award Ceremony on April 6 in Baltimore. Only six other public school districts have been recognized since 1988.

There is much that U.S. teachers and administrators can learn from the experiences of PSD and other schools and districts that have embraced the Baldrige framework as their primary method of understanding and taking control of performance outcomes.

Like a true quality practitioner, JoAnn likens the Baldrige process to a journey. That's because the work doesn't stop once the award is given, the celebrations are over and everyone goes home. The commitment to excellence never ends. Schools and districts can use the Baldrige framework and process to continuously improve every day, week and year. In turn, these schools and districts continuously set the bar higher—and prove the impossible possible.

**Reference:**

1. National Institute of Standards and Technology, Pewaukee School District, [www.nist.gov/baldrige/award\\_recipients/pewaukee-school-district.cfm](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/award_recipients/pewaukee-school-district.cfm).