



## **Continuous Improvement: Any Time, Anywhere, Anyone**

*By Nicole Adrian*

In this newsletter, we typically publish articles about how superintendents, teachers and students use quality tools and methods to improve their districts, schools and classrooms. We don't often realize how these same tools and methods are being used outside the traditional learning epicenter. Until now.

This issue of *Primary and Secondary Education Brief* focuses on driving quality throughout school and district operations—using the same tools and methods traditionally used in classrooms and schools. The articles go behind the scenes and detail how quality tools can be used by all faculty to work out many different types of problems.

In one of those articles from Iredell-Statesville Schools, Natalie Kelly, a former assistant principal at Brawley Middle School, describes how she and the school's custodial team worked together using quality tools to improve the quarterly custodial inspection number and the school's cleanliness, and made students aware of just how much they messed up hallways, classrooms and the cafeteria.

At the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year, the team made it a goal to rank as one of the top three district schools at the secondary level. At the end of the year, the custodial inspection scores were the best of the district's secondary schools.

In another article, by Will Black and Laura Walker of Metropolis Elementary School in Metropolis, IL, describe how administrators used a plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle and root cause analysis to figure out why the school experienced so many fights among students and were forced to issue out-of-school suspensions.

At the beginning of the project, goals were set to have zero student fights in a school year and reduce out-of-school suspensions. Administrators used a PDSA cycle to figure out where fights were happening. They also performed a root cause analysis to determine why the fights were occurring. During the course of a few school years, the number of fights and suspensions was greatly reduced. So far, for the 2009-2010 school year, there have only been two fights and eight suspensions.

Besides the reduced number of fights and suspensions, one of the best things to come out of Metropolis' project is that more improvement projects—especially those involving students—are being pursued. The school's student council regularly uses PDSAs and affinity and relations diagrams.

This goes to show that the same quality tools and methods typically used in schools and classrooms can cross over and easily be used in many district and school operations. They can be used at any time, anywhere and by anyone.