



## From the Editor: Quality Tools for the Classroom

by Amanda Hankel

For most working in the quality profession, Six Sigma success stories are plentiful. Organizations that pioneered the method—Motorola, of course, along with companies such as General Electric and Allied Signal (now Honeywell)<sup>1</sup>—used the method mostly in manufacturing settings.

But does Six Sigma have a place in K-12 education?

This issue of the *Primary and Secondary Education Brief* explores this question.

In the feature article, [“Is It Time for Six Sigma in Education?”](#) author Leslie Gardner draws from her experience teaching quality and supply chain management concepts to high school and middle school teachers to examine why Six Sigma should be used as a quality method in education, despite it needing to overcome some initial obstacles.

Some school districts in the United States have already adopted Six Sigma. According to the article from iSixSigma, [“Using Six Sigma to Solve Issues in Public School System.”](#) Adams County School District 12 in Thornton, CO, began applying Six Sigma to every aspect of its school district in 2008. By “every aspect,” it means using Six Sigma to address educational issues—teachers, textbooks, testing materials and courses—to non-educational issues—heating/ventilation of buildings, ordering materials, lawn and building maintenance. The article covers the challenges the district faced during initial implementation, the improvements it’s realized so far due to the Six Sigma process and what it is planning for the future.

But not everyone involved in primary and secondary education is convinced Six Sigma is the right quality method.

In her *Education Week Teacher* blog, [“Six Sigma Schooling.”](#) Nancy Flanagan, an education writer and consultant, criticizes the iSixSigma article discussing Adams County School District 12’s use of the Six Sigma method. Flanagan argues the changes the district has



seen from the Six Sigma process has not solved any of the real, important issues facing public school systems today.

No matter what side you land on in the debate about whether Six Sigma is the right quality method for K-12 education, there's no question that quality tools of some sort can be useful to teachers and students, and have a place in the classroom.

That's why in this issue, you'll find a [guide to quality tools for teachers](#). There, you'll find some of the most popular quality tools and how-to tutorials to walk you through your first uses of them in a school setting.

Further in her article, Gardner suggests a program such as ASQ's Koalaty Kid would serve as a perfect platform for introducing Six Sigma in schools. Gardner says the program was successful at getting quality tools into the hands of teachers and students, but its use wasn't widespread.

Discontinued a few years ago, the Koalaty Kid program has since been replaced by ASQ's [ImpaQT training](#), which offers ways to deepen the understanding of quality principles on a school, district or classroom-wide level, while keeping the emphasis on education and the journey toward academic excellence. [You can read more about these offerings in this issue, as well.](#)

Every teacher, school and district finds different quality tools useful based on their individual needs and the issues they're looking to address. But it's undeniable that quality tools are of the utmost value to teachers and students, and their use in the classroom will only enhance the education that is given and received. Making these tools, and the resources necessary to learn them, accessible to educators and students is vital to the success of K-12 education, no matter what tool, what quality problem, or what district, is involved.

## Reference

1. *iSixSigma*, "The History of Six Sigma," [www.isixsigma.com/new-to-six-sigma/history/history-six-sigma/](http://www.isixsigma.com/new-to-six-sigma/history/history-six-sigma/)