



The Global Voice of Quality™

ASQ Primary and Secondary Education Brief

Education
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Editor's Note: Take Off Your Blinders

By Megan Schmidt, editor

Insularity could be education quality's greatest obstacle. Education, like other sectors, tends to draw ideas and inspiration from other education institutions. A narrow view can cause education to miss opportunities to learn about transformational process and system engineering in other sectors, and how they can apply those lessons learned as solutions to education's problems.

Usually, the argument against using quality in education is that education deals with people, not widgets. But as Cindy McClung, coordinator for quality of the Lee County School District in Fort Myers, FL, said in an exclusive interview featured in this month's newsletter: "improvement processes are improvement processes no matter the sector." I think McClung makes a valuable point—the improvement processes that are used in one sector to save time and money or create efficiency and safety can have the same effect in education.

Education isn't the only sector operating in a vacuum. Many industries experience difficulty translating success stories from other industries into their own. Healthcare's embrace of quality is a great example of an industry that transformed by learning from other industries.

Although the roots of healthcare quality began in the early 20th century, the seminal report from the Institute of Medicine, "To Err is Human," published in 2000, [was the genesis of far-reaching interest and adoption of the quality movement](#). Healthcare moved away from individualized efforts to promote and implement healthcare quality and embraced collaboration to accomplish common goals. Healthcare began to understand the value of implementing the tools and methods of manufacturing and business to reduce harmful events, cost and time. Certainly, healthcare has a long way to go. But the industry has made great progress in its journey so far.



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While there are many outstanding examples of education quality out there, there also are valuable examples of quality in other industries as well. I encourage you to attend a professional conference outside of education, or network with ASQ members in a division that's different from yours, or request a tour of an organization in your area that uses quality. You never know when or where that next big improvement idea will come from.