# Communication PRinciples for Principals

MAY 2009

# CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN DODEA



Use the Kaizen multimedia presentation available on our website at a staff meeting to walk through some of the components of our continuous improvement initiative and to let staff members hear directly from the leadership.

http://www.dodea.edu/ kaizen/index.cfm

# Helping Employees See the Big Picture

Key to DoDEA's mission is the systemic improvement of teaching and learning. While this approach to education is not new to DoDEA, our leadership has taken a fresh look at the way we approach improvement systemically.

Continuous improvement is at the core of everything DoDEA does and is key to mission success and highest student achievement. It allows DoDEA to look at what's being done, examine how it's being done, evaluate the results, and refine what is done so that the needs of all students are met.

As a principal, you need to communicate this philosophy to our DoDEA team members. This edition will provide some background information to help you connect the dots and show employees how many of the initiatives underway fit together into a bigger picture.

#### Let's take a look at some of the initiatives.

# Realignment of the Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is a road map for keeping DoDEA at the forefront of the Nation for improving student performance and achievement. In April 2008, a committee was convened to review the 2006-2011 Community Strategic Plan. Their charge was to ensure congruency and alignment among goals, outcomes, measures, and milestones. The result of that committee's work was an alignment to the plan, called the 2008 CSP Alignment. The 2008 CSP Alignment is easier to read and understand, provides clear and specific objectives, and defines measures to better match objectives. http://www.dodea.edu/pubs/csp2008.cfm. You can track our progress on this site.

#### Development of a process for programmatic evaluation

New information today can make educational programs that were developed and implemented yesterday obsolete. Some programs can be modified to make them more effective, while others may have to be discontinued. DoDEA HQ, Area, District and School staff need to continually assess data and review research to meet the needs of our students and continue to show gains in student achievement. Our

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Visit the DoDEA website for more information. http://www.dodea.edu process operates on three principles: process and results (not results-only); systemic thinking (DoDEA-wide); and non-judgmental, non-blaming (the data are what they are). The process of programmatic evaluation follows the same steps used in continuous improvement – planning, implementing, evaluating, reviewing, and refining.

#### **Task Groups**

Nine different task groups are currently addressing the areas of Advanced Placement, Assessment, PreK-12 Literacy, Mathematics, Administrator Evaluation, System-wide Professional Development, Professional Technical Studies (PTS), Virtual School, and Counseling. The task group participants represent a cross section of educators, administrators, and association representatives from all levels of DoDEA including the most important level – the classroom.

The task groups in each topic area are charged with a variety of duties including reviewing data, current issues and program evaluations, and student achievement information. Following their reviews, they will make recommendations for improvement, modifications, or the elimination of programs. Task groups will meet until their activities are completed and in some cases this may span several years. The results of their work will be published.

#### Review and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are the important elements to obtaining high student achievement. The alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment is rooted in well developed, purposeful, and clear academic standards. Comprehensive reviews of every curricular and program area will ensure system wide alignment.

DoDEA has contracted with the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning Organization (McREL), to rate our standards based on breadth, depth, and clarity.

When complete, the updated standards will guide school level improvement plans, professional development and program evaluations and become the basis for gathering data about how we assess student and school progress.

#### **Resource Realignment**

**Budget** – We manage \$1.8 billion to operate our school system. Accountability is paramount. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, we began a process for prioritizing mission requirements and allocating limited discretionary funds. Managers from every level of DoDEA participated in that process. As a result we were able to efficiently and effectively manage funds. This budget process will continue for FY 2010.

A recent edition of the Chat Room lets you hear directly from the Director as she answers questions about the direction in which DoDEA is headed in addressing continuous improvement.

http://www.dodea. edu/xcast/2009\_CR\_ smiles/popup.cfm



Capital Improvements and Facility Sustainment – Many of our facilities are in need of improvement and in some cases, replacement. We have worked with the Pentagon to get an additional \$600 million for facility improvements during FY 2010-15.

Human Resources – At the beginning of the school year, DoDEA began a review of every position above the school level. It was found that each area and district has a unique way of staffing and that there were inconsistencies in the way schools were supported. A realignment was necessary in order to maximize resources and provide equitable and consistent mission support.

Realignment in Reporting and Supervision Structure for Curriculum and Instruction – DoDEA's administrative and curricular structure is being reorganized to position our instructional leadership and support staff closer to the schools. This initiative, coupled with the alignment of our standards with curriculum, instruction and assessments, will keep teachers, students and parents better informed and help students be better prepared at every grade level. District Superintendents will report to the Area Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, who will report to the Principal Deputy Director and Associate Director for Education. In addition, the Chief of Curriculum will work closely with Area and District Superintendents.

Area Directors – In order to capitalize on the experience of our most senior leaders in the field, our area directors have been repositioned for next year to bring a fresh look to our field operations. This will allow us to better use their talents and perspectives with a wider range of people. The Area Director's mission has been refocused to directly manage Command Interface; budget; MILCON and facilities; sustainment; maintenance and renovation; safety and security; logistics; and cocurricular responsibilities – thus eliminating a fragmented focus between day-to-day operations; strategic planning; and education/curriculum.

The Educator Career Program – The Educator Career Program was re-instated earlier this year and opened to outside candidates as well. We have a critical need for strong instructional leaders. There will be headquarters involvement in the hiring of all future administrators at the school, district, and area levels.

Area HR, IT and Procurement Functions – Direct reporting of Area HR, IT and Procurement missions to Headquarters has been authorized to ensure consistent policy development and application and to bring standardization across the system.

Kaizen is the of continuous and sustainable process that will allow DoDEA to continue to be a high performing organization that is totally focused on programming. It involves a continuous cycle of review, refinement, and evaluation. It involves redefining our processes and realigning our personnel and resources to meet our mission requirements.



School Level Business Operations – A resource manager position will be established at most schools to focus on day-to-day business and operations. This additional support will enable principals to be instructional leaders focusing on education, curriculum, instruction, and highest student achievement.

### **Strategic Communications**

Effectively communicating the mission, goals, accomplishments, decisions, challenges, and accountability is a key management function. Ongoing communication activities are critical to building and maintaining a relationship with our stakeholders and achieving our goals. Communications plays a key role in every major management decision, policy change, program implementation and significant event. Communications planning anticipates possible public relations impacts and provides communications strategies and tools to assist leaders in explaining our actions.

### **Community Engagement and Accountability**

Critical to our success is having a system in place that promotes meaningful public engagement and two-way communication in support of student development. Accountability and responsiveness to our customers and the public is a serious responsibility. We must maintain respectful communication with stakeholders in support of student development at all levels. We have to be open and responsive in our approach to the concerns and suggestions of our stakeholders. The information we receive through our Customer and Employee Satisfaction Surveys is critical to DoDEA's efforts toward continuous improvement. We'll be analyzing the data carefully and taking specific actions regarding identified areas of concern.

# Focus on Teaching and Learning

While there is much that is changing across DoDEA, there is one thing that remains constant. That constant is what we do for our students. Our students are at the core of everything we do.

Employee and partner (parents, commands, unions) involvement and support of continuous improvement will make the difference. Caring, competent employees in the classroom and supporting the classroom make continuous improvement essential to our system. We must provide our students with a quality education to help them prepare for life in the 21st century.

The process of continuous improvement is usually delivered in small improvements but the culture of continual, small improvements and standardization yields large results in the form of increased student achievement.

