

everyday Influencer



Tim Stay

Chairman of Lakeridge Junior High Community Council

Under the leadership of Tim Stay, Lakeridge Junior High transformed from its district's worst-performing school to a nationally-recognized institution.

In 2002, Lakeridge Junior High was failing. Nearly half of the students failed to achieve basic mastery of math and language arts and Lakeridge ranked at the bottom of its district in most academic categories.

Tim Stay, and other concerned parents, decided something had to change so they teamed with school administration and faculty to form the Lakeridge Junior High Community Council.

They began by benchmarking and measuring key results like the percentage of students who demonstrated mastery over math and language arts as well as the rate of disciplinary incidents.

After careful analysis, they focused on one vital behavior that would drive these results: engaging teachers in a regular cycle of experimenting with best practices and measuring results. Some teachers did well, while others struggled. And the teachers who struggled had few options or incentives to improve.

With Tim as their chairman, the council targeted six sources of influence to improve teachers' performance and repair education at Lakeridge Junior High.

Personal Motivation. The desire to improve needed to come from the teachers. Singling out or blaming teachers would only be counter-productive. Instead, the council met with teachers and shared the school's low numbers. The teachers were shocked by the data.

"Sharing the data was tremendously motivating," said Tim. "We weren't placing blame, just looking at the data and asking ourselves if we were satisfied."

Social Motivation and Ability. The teachers were already bombarded with "improvement programs" that had shown little promise. So, Tim carefully involved the right people in the search for legitimate and applicable solutions. The council sent respected teachers to conferences where they researched best practices used by more successful schools.

Personal Ability. The respected teachers shared what they learned by modeling and practicing the new techniques with their peers. The teachers embraced this culture of learning and began to share advice

and constructive criticism openly with each other.

Structural Ability. The council discovered that the school's daily schedule prevented teachers from implementing the new best practices of conducting student assessments and remediation. So, they changed the schedule from seven-periods to a four-period AB schedule—giving teachers time to measure students' mastery of concepts.

The council and the principal turned the power of setting the academic agenda over to the parents. The administration implemented the parent's initiatives and reported on the school's progress. This empowered parents to take an active role in their children's education.

Tim published academic results in an annual stakeholder's report that was sent to parents, teachers, school-board members, and government leaders. The report detailed weaknesses, strengths and target areas for the coming year. "Every area we've targeted we've improved," said Tim.

Structural Motivation. The annual stakeholder report also stimulated a natural selection process that favored effective educators. While the Community Council could not hire or fire teachers, they could hold teachers accountable with transparent data. Teachers who did not want to be accountable left while successful teachers who valued the reporting transferred to Lakeridge.

Results. In just five years, Lakeridge moved from the bottom of the school district to at or near the top in most academic categories. More than 80 percent of students showed mastery in math and 90 percent showed mastery in language arts. Discipline problems dropped drastically. Last year, more than 100 students transferred to Lakeridge while a neighboring school only had one transfer.

A 30-year veteran teacher said, "Before, I spent all my time disciplining and was just waiting until I could retire. But now, I remember why I love teaching. I'm excited to come to school and I think we're making a difference. Kids are learning in our classes again."

In 2006, Lakeridge was named a National School of Distinction and the U.S. Board of Education is studying the school's success for application throughout the country.