

# case study

## Collaborative Processes Help Cut through Complexity to Bring About Successful Change with Clarity and Confidence



### Recap/Key Points

- Increasing decision-making capacity of leadership, improved clarity and results
- Using a common language for improved communication
- Use of stakeholders enhanced decision making and paved way for effective implementation

### Problem/Challenge

Each of these school systems, with their wide range of programs, multiple campuses, complex legal requirements, multitude of sending districts and diverse student needs and abilities, required leadership at all levels that could quickly understand the issues and work with a wide variety of staff and community members to coordinate, collaborate, and problem solve. In addition, they wanted leaders prepared to create opportunities to move the district forward in its goals to provide innovative programs ensuring students have the skills needed to be college- and career-ready in the 21st Century.

### District Information

New Jersey's Burlington County Institute of Technology (BCIT) and Burlington County Special Services School District (BCSSSD) are two unique county-based systems. BCIT serves 2,050 high school and post-secondary adult learners on its two campuses with over 30 career technical education major programs. Its students come from 40 sending districts within the County and beyond.

BCSSSD consists of five campuses and provides therapeutic programs for over 600 preschool through post-21 students in a partnership with Bancroft at Burlington County to address students with multiple disabilities, autism and behavioral challenges. In addition, it not only offers a continuum of customized options for students at its main campus, alternative school and Lumberton Campus, it is responsible for providing: Basic Skills, Child Study Team support, related services, nursing, career and technical education, college credit dual enrollment with Rowan College at Burlington County and Title One programs for many other districts in the county.



## Solution

BCIT/BCSSSD leadership recognized that in order to successfully address existing and arising challenges, they needed to build communication and leadership capacity. Decisions and problem solving across the district had to be approached with a common set of tools that would provide for meaningful stakeholder participation and result in improved communication and outcomes. The district invested the time and resources to enable staff to become confident facilitators in TregoED processes. Leaders expected that solutions, issues, and decisions would be addressed using that common approach and language.

## Results

The systemic integration of the TregoED processes throughout the district has increased district capacity for making the best decisions and developing innovative and lasting solutions for the children that they serve. District officials report that as a result of implementing TregoED processes throughout the district, there are heightened levels of communication and collaboration between and amongst the faculty and administration. Decisions in the district are now deliberate and data-driven, ultimately saving the district money.

Using Situation Appraisal, building administrator's weekly reports were no longer lists of issues and solutions, but became a well thought-out, clarified and prioritized list with an action plan in place. Problems and opportunities were not handed up the chain for action, rather, top administrators were given a clear description of what the issues were and how they were being dealt with. Program changes in middle school math resulted in increased student achievement after recommended changes were implemented. Teachers felt empowered through their involvement in the Situation Appraisal that helped bring about that change. Several other high-impact decisions were made, including selecting a new career major and determining possible scheduling options.

Perhaps, the most significant use of process was in completely restructuring the BCSSSD main campus, placing students in programs according to their age rather than disability. This reorganization could have been highly volatile and controversial as it affected staffing, logistics, clients, community, resources and student achievement. Instead, leaders were able to effectively use stakeholder input and strategic processes and thus make this dramatic transition—one that went smoothly and had support from the entire educational community, students, staff, parents and community.



**“The BCIT/BCSSSD Districts have invested both time and energy into training while infusing TregoED processes throughout the work of the districts among administrators and teachers because we believe that the benefits of thoughtful, analytic and strategic thinking will be reflected in enhanced student achievement, data-driven solutions, professional staff empowerment and savings of both time and money to the districts for the foreseeable future.”**

**Dr. Christopher Nagy, Superintendent**



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