

Success Story

Johnston County Public Schools

Creating a Culture of Collaborative Decision Making

District Information

Johnston County Public Schools (JCPS) is a fast-growing district—the 7th largest school district in North Carolina. It serves more than 36,000 students and is comprised of 23 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, and 10 high schools.

Recap/Key Points

- Shared approach, consistent usage, and stakeholder involvement build a culture of collaboration
- Deliberate collaboration leads to: better decisions and outcomes, greater commitment and confidence, and less wasted time and money
- Decisions well-made are a function of—and contribute to—a positive, data-driven culture



Problem/Challenge

JCPS rolled out a new strategic plan (JOCO 2020). Change can bring anxiety as well as exciting opportunities. District leaders wondered how to ensure that the new plan would be implemented with fidelity and commitment from each stakeholder. JCPS needed a way to take the plan from the aspirational to the operational.

Before implementation, several big decisions needed to be made. One such decision was the need to reassess insurance benefits. Previously, emotion-laden, big-money decisions of this nature had not utilized a formal, transparent, and systematic evaluation process. Consequently, there was a lack of confidence and trust in decisions that had been made.

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Solutions

JCPS started by introducing TregoED's problem-solving and decision-making approaches to district leaders and staff. This provided a common approach, vocabulary, and methodology which facilitated collaboration on critical issues.

When it came time to address the aforementioned health insurance decision, JCPS put together a benefits committee of members who did not normally work together but who brought key areas of expertise or skills. The committee was given an overview of Decision Analysis (DA) and divided into four groups—each focused on a different type of insurance (e.g., medical, dental, etc.). Working in pairs, small groups, and large group, a list of criteria was developed for each insurance area and then used to evaluate each company's proposal. The DA framework helped each group organize relevant data and ultimately score alternatives and make a decision in which the group had confidence.

Results

An immediate and lasting benefit from using DA on this major financial decision was the increased transparency provided. It became very clear which providers performed well against the criteria that had been developed.

In addition, it was much easier to communicate the results and rationale for the decisions. It gave the Board confidence that this was a well-considered decision—and it was much easier to communicate the rationale to the Board and other stakeholders.

Mr. Arthur Stanley, the CFO who led the process, was impressed by the visible rationale provided by the process and how it helped provide structure and clear communication to all stakeholders—including vendors who were not selected.

It is important to note that even though no one on the committee was an insurance expert, they were all able to contribute in meaningful ways and effectively analyze the various insurance products and vendors. DA provided a structure and roadmap which allowed them to see what information was needed and how to make sense of it.

Modeling use of process on a substantial decision allowed JCPS leaders to demonstrate and facilitate collaborative work with the Board and other district leaders. They found that actually using the concepts was a powerful and persuasive motivator. For many, this experience became the basis of building a culture of decision-making confidence, inspiring more people to use process more often. This culture will be the foundation that the district will need to begin the sweeping changes of JOCO 2020.



TregoED processes have helped us create a culture of collaborative and transparent decision making and problem solving focused on best meeting the needs of our students.”

Dr. Ross Renfrow, Superintendent
Johnston County Public Schools



info@tregoed.org | 866-268-3980 | 116 Village Blvd., Suite 300 | Princeton, NJ 08540 | www.TregoED.org

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