

Success Story

York County School Division

District Information

York County School Division (YCSO) serves 12,500+ students in the heart of Virginia's historic triangle (between Virginia Beach and Richmond). YCSO consists of 19 schools with an array of varied, rigorous programs.

Recap/Key Points

- Extensive collaboration improves outcomes, changes culture, and creates opportunities for engagement with the community
- Clear expectations encourage initial use of analytic process
- Results encourage sustained use of process



Problem/Challenge

YCSO faced several key issues affecting multiple stakeholders, including: revising a primary grading scale, addressing school website needs, assessing high school mid-term exam expectations, and expanding special education classrooms and staffing. Each issue required collaboration from several diverse departments.

YCSO needed a shared, systematic, and proven way to successfully tackle these complex issues and ensure critical objectives and priorities were fully considered. Division leaders hoped that a common approach could improve communications, use of time, and progress monitoring. In addition, they needed to capture the best thinking of the community and secure the involvement and commitment of multiple departments and stakeholders.

Solution

YCSD utilized several key components for building a cohesive way to approach critical issues and decisions:

- **Introductory Training (*Strategic Tools for Excellent Problem Solving 1: Build Skills*)**
Initially, the Executive Leadership Team and central office staff were trained in TregoED Situation Appraisal and Decision Analysis processes. As process use spread, YCSD expanded training to include more departments and introduce Potential Problem Analysis and Problem Analysis.
- **Commitment to Use Process and Involve Stakeholders**
After training, participants were expected to use the tools on small and large decisions—and involve relevant stakeholders when applicable. Trained staff members began using the processes with varied issues and departments, ensuring key stakeholders were included. For instance, when Student Services was deciding whether or not to open an additional classroom for students with multiple disabilities, a director, building administrators, coordinators and teachers were all involved. Parents also participated when appropriate, such as with the development of the new school calendar, and addressing transportation challenges.
- **Drawing on Others' Expertise and Help**
To ensure objectivity and decrease emotional bias, departments asked for and provided facilitation help from others less connected to the subject matter. For example, the Public Relations and Communications Officer facilitated for the Primary Grading Scales Committee in recommending a new K-2 report card. And the Math Coordinator facilitated a group of business owners, county economic development staff, and YCSD senior leadership in identifying the top focus areas for business and school partnerships.



As a result of the partnership with TregoED, leaders are more confident in making decisions that get to the root of the problem and result in continuous improvement. In addition, the use of TregoED processes has resulted in extensive collaboration and created opportunities for engagement with the community."

Victor D. Shandor, Ed.D., Superintendent, York County School Division

Results

Collaborative, systematic problem solving has become the norm at YCSD. Use of TregoED processes and involvement of stakeholders have improved the collaborative culture of YCSD, increasing cooperation and encouraging leaders to reach across departments and the community for engagement, support and implementation.

People have seen the impact that using process can have on students. Process use has helped improve student programs and services and academic performance through focus on learning gaps and test scores. *For example:*

- SCAN was used to address a growing reading performance gap for students with disabilities. The group identified contributing factors and implemented short-range strategies to improve student outcomes. As a result, the division level gap has narrowed to its lowest level since 2011 and there is a new three-year plan to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Decision Analysis was used to select a new career investigation course for middle school students
- Problem Analysis was used to analyze a drop in one school's reading scores as well as a disproportional representation of some student subgroups on discipline referrals.
- Process was used to grapple with overcrowding at several elementary schools and uneven increases in student enrollment. A committee comprised of parents, principals and central office staff identified critical issues and evaluated proposed options ultimately getting consensus for a recommendation made to the school board.

TregoED processes have helped YCSD involve diverse stakeholders and develop effective and lasting solutions to critical issues and create opportunities for engagement with the community. Leaders are equipped with new tools and supported by a culture and systems that encourage their use. This has resulted in more confidence in making decisions that get to the root of a problem and result in continuous improvement.

