

The Pennsylvania **ADMINISTRATOR**

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

✓ ***Meet Your New President...
Dr. Beth A. Haldeman – Page 4***

✓ ***Save the Date – PA Educational
Leadership Summit – Page 15***

***Plus...Act 45 Update, Save the Date – 2017 State
Conference & Assistant Principal of the Year***

Magazine of the Pennsylvania
Principals Association

FEBRUARY 2017

The Road Less Traveled in Education

By Dr. Tod F. Kline



About the Author: **Tod F. Kline, Ed.D.**, is the superintendent of the Susquehanna Township School District in Harrisburg. He serves on the Mid-Atlantic Alliance of Performance Excellence (a regional Baldrige organization). He earned his doctorate degree from Widener University, his master of science degree at Western Maryland College and his bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina's School of the Arts. Dr. Kline has published two educational books with Parker Publishing/Pearson.

Susquehanna Township School District (STSD) just a short time ago was a district facing severe problems as lawsuits, political challenges, curricular deficiencies, leadership instability, departing students, families and staff (some with much experience) and major dysfunction almost to a chaotic state. The district now faces a brighter future on a mission to be world class.

The district is located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, within the perimeter of a 17-square-mile township. The township and school district at one time were extremely synonymous. For years, the school district was known as one of the best places to send children for a very good education in the central Pennsylvania region. Oh, and, by the way, it is one of the most diverse school districts in the state of Pennsylvania (39.9% Black/African American; 34% White; 10% Hispanic; 8.3% Multiracial; 7.1% Asian; and others).

STSD was starting to realize the consequences of the issues it was facing. With many employees abandoning the district as well as many families, the institutional knowledge of how things worked was being lost. Therefore, the situation was causing major systemic problems while besmirching the reputation of the district.

In the last couple of years, the district has taken a new road leading to a better future. The recent change in direction can be attributed to a very determined school board, a community that loves and supports its schools and a commitment to performance excellence. That is the purpose of this article.

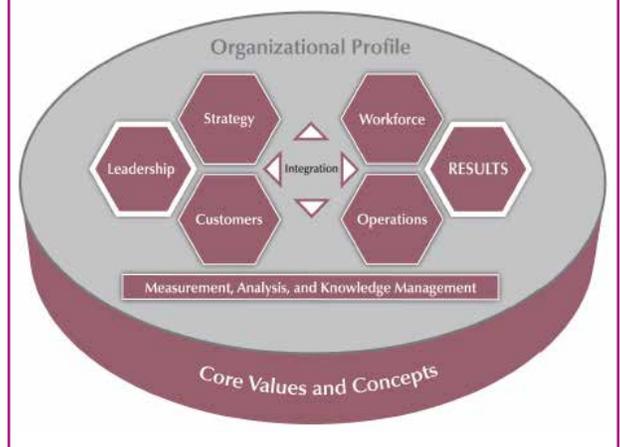
STSD embarked on a *Journey of HOPE – Hanna's Organizational Performance Excellence*. HOPE uses the Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence, similar to Schools to Watch, Blue Ribbon Schools and Middle States. However, in this author's opinion, a much more rigorous process. The framework focuses on seven categories for ongoing improvement. The categories include six focused on organizational processes: **Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customers, Measurement-Analysis and Knowledge Management, Workforce and Operations**; and one category focused exclusively on **Results** (See Figure 1).

In response to the competitive pressure from foreign manufacturers, most notably Japanese car makers, Congress passed legislation establishing the Baldrige Award in 1987. Many businesses, including Ritz Carlton and Caterpillar Financial, have experienced great success with this approach. In 1998, the award was extended to include health care and education. In 2001, the first educational institution won the awards (Chugach School District, Alaska, and Pearl River School District, New York).

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Education has recognized it as a recommended form of school improvement. School systems across the country including Jenks in Oklahoma; Iresdale-Statesville in North Carolina; Montgomery County in Maryland; Pewaukee in Wisconsin; and the San Diego Charter School have been very successful school systems that have also used the framework for continual improvement.

More districts than those mentioned above are using the framework, but those mentioned were Baldrige Performance Excellence Award Winners. That is a big deal. Over the years, the President of the United States would present the award, but during recent years the Secretary of Commerce presents the award to winners at the national Quest Conference. These school systems are recognized as "world class." The criteria for winning the award is quite challenging. The Pearl River School District in New York won the award in 2001,

Figure 1 - Baldrige Framework



Continued from previous page

and found its community's property values had risen (Pearl River School District Baldrige Application, 2001, p.37). Iresdale-Statesville discovered their achievement scores improved from some of the worst in the state of North Carolina to the highest after implementing the Baldrige Framework. The value of this framework is not only in organizational improvement; it is a way of doing business. And remarkably, the framework allows for, and actually presents, an approach for organizations to be very unique in how the framework is implemented.

So let's return to the Susquehanna Valley in Harrisburg. STSD has adopted this framework with enthusiasm. The Journey of HOPE has provided the community and its district with a great deal of hope. Through high levels of stakeholder inclusiveness in the planning and improvement process, hope is being realized.

The HOPE design includes HOPE teams that represent each of the process categories, with the results category divided across those teams. Parents, teachers, county leaders, township supervisors, board members, former employees, support staff and other local business and community leaders are active participants on all of these teams.

As one of the first steps in the Journey of HOPE, leaders established a new mission, vision and values for the district and developed a Leadership Model (See Figure 2). The model is a road map for how the district operates

by looking at all stakeholder needs; developing ideas and plans; deploying the plans; measuring and learning from the progress of the plans; celebrating successes; revisiting the plans to improve; and then returning to examine the needs of stakeholders as the model continues on and on.

The Leadership Model addresses many key requirements of the Baldrige Framework including those related to strategic planning. Using the questions in the Strategic category has resulted in a very performable strategic planning process and a plan that is currently being deployed throughout the organization. It is a comprehensive planning process that promotes execution and success in all areas, rather than the required state planning process that is focused solely on academics and never sees much use within the six-year cycle.

It is early in the Journey of HOPE, but STSD has already witnessed a rise in enrollments. Some families that put their children in private schools have started to return. Some staff members who left the district have reapplied for positions in order to return. The high school's School Performance Profile

Figure 2 - Leadership Model



has improved to an all-time high of 71.1 (from last year's 62). The Advanced Placement passing rate has improved from 62% to 82% (including greater improvement in African-American students). Staff, parents, community, partners and students are feeling a part of the process and decision making due to the HOPE Framework.

The district has a long journey ahead before achieving world class. Nevertheless, with the success, direction and determination of the community, staff and administration, world class is just a matter of time due to a road less taken.

For additional information regarding this article, you may contact the author at tkline@hannasd.org.

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Artist in Residence Program Enhances Curriculum Pre-K-12 – Grants Available to Schools throughout Pennsylvania

Continued from page 28

Contacting the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Arts in Education Partners

Basic education, special education and pre-K-Head Start services can be expanded when school administrators take advantage of partnership opportu-

nities with state agencies such as the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Access to grant money is facilitated through the partners in the Arts in Education program. Creative planning and "out of the box" thinking can and will result in "every student succeed-

ing." A list of partnership agencies of the PCA Arts in Education Partnership zcan be found at <http://www.arts.pa.gov/>. For further information, contact the author at catherine.cullen@scranton.edu.

References

- Baker, D. (2013). Arts Integration and Cognitive Development. *Journal for Learning Through the Arts*, 9(1).
Willis, J. (2006). *Research Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.