

Everyone,

Here is Path Note No. 23. Winter is back! As we continue reading the OPFC Updates, it was suggested I more frequently include updates of some of our initiatives and focus points for the year. Although these are not included today, I will work to do so. I appreciate the feedback. Collecting the feedback is a step to improvement.

Our Path Topic

Everyone on the administrative team knows and jokes about a sense of euphoria that comes over me when I hear we have a process, developing a process, or just re-evaluating a process. Admittedly, this is very true.

Process is a simple concept that is made up of repeatable steps that accomplish a goal. The purpose is typically to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Some people see it as burdensome. Nevertheless, with organizations of any size, but, particularly, WASD is a good candidate for ongoing process development and maintenance.

Some quality experts (Ringer, 2016) have identified an acronym for PROCESS— Proven/Repeatable/Owner-driven/Compatible/Executable/Sustainable/Successful. Frameworks for ongoing organizational improvement typically examine processes and systems. The old quote attributed to Albert Einstein: “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing, and expecting a different outcome.” We do this a lot, not only in education, but in so much what we do throughout the country.

A week or so ago, the State of Hawaii accidentally notified their citizens that a nuclear missile or attack was eminent. Fortunately, that was a false alarm. The problem for the State was that they had No Process for retracting that false alarm. If the State did have such a process, the mistake would not have been quite so devastating.

Schools have fire drill processes that have been in practice for decades. Those processes can be lifesaving. The only real issue is that most schools do not review the process each year to improve it. That is pretty important.

The reason for this topic is to start to make us more aware of developing processes or checklists for pretty much everything we do. Yes, a checklist can sometimes be enough. An administrative assistant preparing a packet of information for a meeting may need a process, but likely only needs a checklist.

Our WASD Leadership Model is a process. It has not been deployed, yet, but will be in the future. It is a process for improving what we do; no matter what we do (as far as a position) for the District. Process makes our life easier. If a department is wanting to improve overall or a certain approach, the Leadership Model can be used. Even an individual can use it as a guide to improving what he/she does in his/her job.

This year, several processes have been developed or revised. A student expulsion process has been implemented. It is not perfect, but will need revisited to make improvements after this year. Currently, working through developing a process for an internal strategy planning. The State provides the Comprehensive Plan, but we will have an internal process for strategic planning.

ADLI (Approach/Deployment/Learning/Integration) is a tool used to evaluate how well a process is working. Again, it is always good practice to re-evaluate a process periodically to see if it needs some updating or improvement. But remember, good processes are measured. Re-evaluating is much more evidence-driven if measured. That may be a future topic for discussion.

As mentioned, process can make life much easier to deal with day in and day out. It is quite liberating when you know what to expect and how to do it. Things calm down and work well when everyone knows the role they play and what to do.

Silly as it sounds, I hope to develop a process for process development. That way, we know how to develop a process effectively; and, maybe everyone can learn together the value of process.

Review for You

- What is a Key Work Process?

Events

- Reminder—February 19th (Presidents' Day) is now a day in session due to our January 17th snow day.
- The high school parent forum is February 6th at 6:30 PM.
- Middle school Valentine Dance is February 9th, 2:30 to 4:30 PM.
- A two-hour delay for students on Tuesday, February 20th.

Piece of the Puzzle

- Brenda Slick was nominated as the Piece of the Puzzle this week. Brenda is the music teacher at Summitview and Hooverville. Her passion for music is contagious and she is always willing to use her creativity to provide new and innovative opportunities for her students. Despite a very short notice, Brenda was able to organize and prepare 20 students for a performance for the WASD School Board of Directors Appreciation Dinner on January 23rd. This is a testimony to her commitment to education and her sincere desire to provide opportunities for her students to shine! Let's all congratulate Brenda today!!

Review Answers

- Key work process is a major or significant work process that is critical to the organization's success.
- Examples of Key Work Processes for a school district (certainly, many of these can be combined)—
 - Creating a Safe Environment
 - Developing Curriculum and Instructional Materials
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Providing student support services and programs
 - Managing student services
 - Managing student transportation
 - Managing customer relationships
 - Developing and engaging staff.
 - Managing facilities
 - Managing information and knowledge
 - Managing supplier, partner, and stakeholder relationships

- Planning budgeting, and monitoring performance.

Extra This Week

A number of our WASD folks have asked me to share the Record Herald articles published once a month. The articles discuss a number of topics including how superintendents make snow calls. January's article is attached. I will attach some of those published during the fall over the next few weeks.

Final Thoughts

- *If you quit on the process, you are quitting on the result.*—Idowu Koyenikan, Wealth for All: Living a Life of Success at the Edge of Your Ability
- *If you can't describe what you are doing in a process, you don't know what you are doing.*—W. Edward Deming
- *Processes underpin business capabilities, and capabilities underpin strategy execution.*—Pearl Zhu, Digital Capability: Building Lego
- *If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you've always got.*—Henry Ford
- *Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.*—Mark Twain

Have a great rest of the week. Hang in there as we trek through winter. Take care!
Tod

Darned If You Do. Darned If You Don't.

With the holidays behind us, and the winter season fully in place, it is now the time when some people love to see the snowflakes fall from the sky. There are those who love to see the fresh, white snow on the ground and the beauty it provides. School children love to watch the weather channels and hope for the precipitation to provide them with a day or a couple of hours off school. Yeah, well...this is also the time of year that the school superintendent would like to disconnect the phone, pray for warm temperatures, and hibernate until spring.

Typically each year, school superintendents begin to prepare plans and letters for dealing with weather related concerns by the end of October or early November. It usually depends on the year and the weather outlook for the coming season. School districts need plans for what to communicate, how to communicate, and who needs to be notified about cancellations, delays, early dismissals, make-ups and any other weather-related changes in the school calendar.

School superintendents or other officials will monitor the weather daily to see if there are any forecasted storms or weather events that could impact the safety of students arriving to or returning home from school. School superintendents, from November through at least the middle of March and possibly the beginning of April (depending on the season), will stay up until midnight or later, and arise about 4 A.M. monitoring the weather in order to make a decision whether to cancel, delay the start of, or arrive on time to school. Why so late and so early you might ask? A decision to go, not to go, delay going, or send students home early needs to be made. It is a critical decision; and, there's a lot to that decision.

Parents need to know as soon as possible if their child is going to school on time, a couple hours late, or not at all. If school is cancelled, parents need a plan for their child for the day. If school is delayed, parents need to know how to care for their child until school starts two hours late. If kids are being sent home early from school, parents have to know what the plan is for their son or daughter's rest of the day since school closed. Parents worry about sending their child to school when it is snowing or icing, or bad weather is predicted. The safety of their child is on their mind.

School staff need to know the status of the weather and the school schedule. Staff that travel long distances to get to school need to know if school will be in session or not. Sometimes, staff will leave for school, and school is cancelled during the trek to work. That is certainly a safety issue. Some school employees, including teachers, are not paid for days that are cancelled. They get paid for the days that are made up due to a cancellation.

There are many internal school services that need to know the school schedule status. Food service begins preparing breakfast. In many districts, the school kitchens begin at 6 A.M. or sometimes earlier. Early dismissals or school delays impact the school food service departments because of lunch. Superintendents want their students to eat before going home, so they know that the kids had a decent meal for the day. Unfortunately, not all kids are guaranteed that privilege. So a decision to send kids

home before lunch or after is a major consideration. Again, when that decision is made, it impacts food service and its plan for preparing meals for students.

The custodial and maintenance folks of a school system need to know what is going on with the school schedule due to the weather. These folks work on the heating, lighting, mechanical, and, particularly, the snow removal services. Walkways, driveways, and playground areas (when possible) need cleared before school starts. The parking lots need cleared before staff can have a place to park.

The bus contractors need to know as soon as possible in order to get their fleet moving to pick up and deliver kids to either school or home safely. And believe me, driving a bus full of kids is not an easy job by any means...let alone, driving during bad weather. Think about that; what a responsibility!

The community needs to know if school is in session or not. The borough and townships work hard to clear streets and roads of snow and ice for traffic to move. These folks work pretty hard to keep our kids safe, and they are great partners with our schools.

How do school districts make their weather decisions? School officials monitor the weather. Communication between transportation/contractors, townships/borough, and school officials to discuss the weather and safety conditions of the roads in the district and outside of the district. Remember, school districts send kids to various schools outside of its own school district boundaries. In addition, school districts cover a lot of territory, and weather can vary between the mountains and the valley...sometimes even between neighborhoods. This goes for extreme temperatures, too. Not just ice and snow.

Superintendents of neighboring districts typically talk and compare situations. Again, sometimes districts have kids in various schools for different reasons. Some administrative conference calls will include PennDot, the State Police, and/or the National Weather Service. The telephone lines and cell phones are ringing off the hook during weather events. These people share how long it will take or if they can be ready for school or need to close. Again, the schools have to clear parking lots and walks and food service needs to know whether to start breakfast or lunch. If either meal is started, and kids are not in school to eat, it can be an expensive waste.

Finally, when a decision is made to close, delay, open, or dismiss early from school, the communication lines begin. Robocalls, website messages, texts, tweets, calls to television and radio stations, and so many other forms of communication are happening. Deployment of a decision is critical.

No matter the decision that is made, some people complain. If school is cancelled, the superintendent receives calls complaining that the weather wasn't that bad. And, of course, if school isn't cancelled, complaint calls are asking: "why are the kids in school when the weather is so bad?" That is the tough part, the decision. High school and middle school students have to have 990 hours and 180 days of school to complete the year. Elementary students need 900 hours and 180 days. When you delay, dismiss early, or cancel school, these factors have to be a consideration. Graduation is part of that concern. By mid-March, the district tries to have graduation day set, due to family members of graduates who may be travelling from distances that require planning ahead. Schools schedule make-up

days throughout the calendar, but sometimes the weather doesn't agree on the number of days needed.

So now you have an idea what goes on behind the scenes when deciding whether or not to operate school during inclement weather. The decision is not easy, so you are darned if you do and darned if you don't. If there is or isn't snow/ice on the ground/subzero windchills, and school is cancelled, just remember that a child's safety is first and foremost the consideration. I would rather err on the side of safety than to risk one child's wellbeing. Going that extra day at the end of the year is often worth the peace of mind.