

Thursday, October 9, 2008

Lean Thinking for Schools workshops hosted at ISDs

Running a school today takes much more than reading, writing and arithmetic. It takes the ability to successfully balance limited financial resources with greater demands for high quality student results. Lean thinking can help.

"Everyone is facing a budget crunch, even schools," said Shannon Flumerfelt, assistant professor/Educational Leadership at OU's School of Education and Human Services. "Lean thinking is not only a dynamic resource for global businesses and corporations to use for greater effectiveness, it is an empowering principle that can help schools, non-profits and service organizations reach their full potential, even in challenging financial times."

Lean thinking principles were shared with school administrators from systems across the state at the first Lean Thinking for Schools two-day workshop, held at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (ISD) in Ann Arbor. Follow up workshops are being hosted this fall in several districts, including the Macomb Intermediate School District.

"School administrators have a clear vision of what they want to accomplish, but the challenge lies in trying to pull the many elements together effectively and efficiently to accomplish these goals," Flumerfelt said. "Lean thinking is re-thinking what you do in order to create a more effective model."

Flumerfelt stresses that lean thinking does not necessarily mean cutting programs or jobs.

"One of the fundamental ideas in lean principles is to set up labor as fixed costs, not as a variable," she said. "Lean thinking is not targeting the easy picks, such as staff cutbacks or removing music or art programs, as cutting these would take away value from the school. Lean thinking is analyzing what you are doing and achieving the best practices overall."

The lean philosophy focuses on developing excellence by identifying what is of highest value to stakeholders and customers, and then allocating resources to achieve these goals while eliminating waste, she said.

For more information on upcoming Lean Thinking for Schools seminars, visit the [Lean Schools Web site](#).



The Pawley Learning Institute hosted its first Lean Thinking for Schools workshop this spring in conjunction with the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (ISD). School systems from across the state participated, with many scheduling follow up workshops for system administrators. Similar workshops are being hosted in Macomb County in conjunction with the Macomb Intermediate School District this fall.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, October 9, 2008
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Thursday, October 9, 2008
Article Start Date: Thursday, October 9, 2008