

Thursday, December 17, 2009

Reeths-Puffer School District experiences second round of Lean training

The Reeths-Puffer School District in Muskegon, Mich. sent ten administrators through the Lean Professional Certificate Program, offered by the Oakland University Pawley Lean Institute, last year and has sent ten more through the program this year.

The training this year started in October and will end in April with five full-day sessions. Taught by Dr. Shannon Flumerfelt, director of Lean Thinking for Schools at the Pawley Lean Institute, the program is about understanding the basic concepts of being a Lean champion, and then developing and implementing projects into the school district.

"We help them with the planning of the projects, and we provide them with what's called just-in-time support while they're implementing," Flumerfelt said. "Just-in-time support simply means that I'm here to assist them when they need it."

Flumerfelt pointed out that an interesting fact about the Reeths-Puffer training is that the group has taken on a strategy for the training. Reeths-Puffer worked with the Pawley Lean Institute on how to maximize training in the school district to make sure the attendees get as much out of it as possible.

Dr. Shannon Flumerfelt (center) assists Reeths-Puffer administrators (left to right) Pam Turner, Cathy Kropewnicki and Paul Klimsza during a Lean Thinking for Schools session.

"At the Pawley Institute, we support the idea of strategic training, if possible," Flumerfelt said. She added that strategic thinking is part of the Lean approach.

Some topics covered in the training include: A3, CX, Plan-Do-Check-Act, 5S, value-stream mapping, eight forms of waste and gradualism.

According to participant Wanda Groeneveld, principal at Twin Lake Elementary in the Reeths-Puffer School District, Lean focuses on efficiency rather than just cutting.

"Lean makes us look at what adds value," said Steve Edwards, assistant superintendent for Curriculum, Professional Development and Technology at Reeths-Puffer. "Knowing that we have very difficult decisions to make, Lean will help us identify those redundancies and gaps that we have."

According to Edwards, the biggest result of the Lean training is a change in thinking and level of intentionality with decisions.

"With that intentionality, we've made better decisions," he said. Edwards added that the Lean tools allow the district to make intentional, deliberate decisions about how to allocate resources, such as time and money.

According to Groeneveld, a result of using Lean is having a higher efficiency and being able to make wiser budget decisions. She added that they use Lean tools to solve or process problems.

"We're all just learning and growing together still," she said.

Lean Thinking for Schools seminars are nationally available to school systems. For more information, visit www.oakland.edu/leanschools.

SUMMARY

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Created by Amanda Benjamin (aabenjam@oakland.edu) on Thursday, December 17, 2009
Modified by Rachel Zynel (rezynel@oakland.edu) on Monday, January 23, 2012
Article Start Date: Thursday, December 17, 2009