Strategic Briefing Report
Continuous Improvement Team

June 2019

STRATEGIC BRIEFING REPORT
CONTINOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM

OVERVIEW

Rationale: Get Better at Getting Better

Research on effective continuous improvement applied in an education setting suggests that the process requires efficacy (shared belief that continuous improvement makes a difference); relational trust; collective responsibility; authentic collaboration; transparent communication; and trustworthy data collection and analysis. These research findings informed the work of a 12-member inquiry team brought together during the 2019 strategic planning process for Upper Arlington Schools. This team was composed of community and business leaders, district central and building administration, and staff charged with the task of studying the current and desired state of the district's continuous improvement approach. Continuous improvement is defined as a disciplined and ongoing approach to improving student outcomes and operational efficiency. Key principles of an effective continuous improvement approach include:

1. See the system that produces the current outcomes
2. Focus on key processes
3. Focus on variation in performance (what works, for whom, under what circumstances)
4. Progress requires collective learning and discovery inside a culture of improvement

APPROACH

The continuous improvement system inquiry process was designed to maximize both learning and curiosity. In addition to representing their own stakeholder perspective, the people involved in this process were both learners and researchers. The charge of the continuous improvement team and guiding questions are defined below.

> **Charge:**
> *How might the UA school system support the realization of whole learning and*

well-being strategic priorities through a common and consistent continuous improvement system and culture?

Guiding Questions

1. What is the **operational definition** of continuous improvement?
2. What is the **current state** of continuous improvement in the district? What philosophies, policies, and practices currently influence this framework?
3. What does the current **research and literature** tell us about strategies for effective continuous improvement?
4. What are the **conditions and principles** that support and shape a strong continuous improvement system and culture?
5. What is the **desired state** (approach) for continuous improvement in the district? What does it look like, sound like, and feel like?
6. How will we know when we have achieved our desired state? What are the indicators and how will/can they be **monitored and measured**?
7. What is our evidence-based **theory of action**? What should we **stop, start, and strengthen** to ensure an effective continuous improvement approach?

LEADERSHIP

The continuous improvement group included central office and building level staff along with business and community leaders. It was facilitated by Brad Mitchell of Battelle for Kids. Members included: Superintendent Paul Imhoff, Ed.D.; Associate Superintendent Kathy Jenney, Ed.D.; Treasurer/CFO Andrew Geistfeld; Brad Campbell from TDP Company; Andy Livingston from Huntington Bank; Windermere Elementary School Principal Julie Nolan; Hastings Middle School Principal Mike Robertson; Tremont Elementary School teacher Leslie Hancock; Upper Arlington High School teacher Jeff Schuster; Ron Selzer from Operations; Patrick Pugh from Operations; and Heidi Orsini from The Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The group held 2 two-hour meetings during April and May 2019. The group focused on continuous improvement leadership, learning capacity and resource management capacity. Leadership capacity was defined as the ability of system leadership to set clear direction and high expectations, to engage and involve stakeholders meaningfully

and productively and implement strategies and actions to support a coherent continuous improvement system and culture. Learning capacity was defined as the system's ability to establish and sustain a positive and adaptive learning culture for all students and staff. Resource management capacity was defined as the allocation and use of resources to ensure equitable and productive support of system effectiveness. The timeline below reflects the activity of the inquiry team during the two meetings.

Date	Process
April 2019	Launch team, review continuous improvement process principles and best practices, and prioritize continuous improvement leadership, learning capacity and resource management capacity focus areas
May 2019	Reduce prioritized continuous improvement focus areas and make a small set of strategic plan recommendations

A summary of prioritized focus areas from the first meeting was documented and shared with the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) between the first and second meetings of the continuous improvement group. At the same time, Battelle for Kids (BFK) completed a review of continuous improvement processes of top-performing school systems from around the country as well as world class school systems from around the globe. At the May group meeting, SCG feedback and the BFK field review were shared. The continuous improvement group used a consultancy protocol to efficiently process SCG feedback and field review information in order to make final recommendations regarding continuous improvement system leadership, learning capacity and resource management capacity. The protocol resulted in moving from 26 to two continuous improvement system priority recommendations for the strategic plan.

The work of this group was amplified and accelerated by articulating with both recommendations and feedback from the SCG, the district's Teaching and Learning Team (TLT) composed of faculty and administration representatives from central office and all buildings and, finally, the district's leadership team (DLT). This enabled the group to get insight and feedback from throughout the district about what were the most essential strategic recommendations for strengthening continuous improvement strategies, processes and culture. The table in Appendix I provides a cross-walk of essential questions from the SCG, TLT and DLT.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
Get better at getting better

Together, we build on our strengths to develop a consistent process improvement system and culture. This will serve as a foundational element of the plan and means taking a disciplined and ongoing approach to improving student and system outcomes tied to our strategic priorities and whole-child philosophy.

CONSISTENCY

    a. Create a process-improvement framework that is consistent, cyclical and easy to use
    b. Ensure efficacy and ownership of framework through a system support team
    c. Strengthen leadership capacity to prioritize and use the improvement process

CAPACITY

    a. Create better ways to solicit viable improvement ideas from students and staff
    b. Ensure the human and operational resources to support process improvement
    c. Strengthen faculty and staff capacity to use the process-improvement framework

APPENDIX I

The following table provides a cross-walk of essential questions from the Strategic Core Group (SCG), Teaching and Learning Team (TLT) and District Leadership Team (DLT).

	SCG	TLT	DLT
Definition, Philosophy and Communications	-What are we going to stop doing? -How do we help students explore more than just what they see in the school day? -How can we make sure continuous improvement is not an end in itself but further the goals of well-being and the whole child? -Is there a financial target we are trying to attain? -How can we increase transparency? How can we better understand how all of our departments are interconnected	-What does it even mean "culture of continuous improvement"? What does it look like at a classroom level? -What does operational excellence look like in new learning environments, curriculum, technology, professional learning and personnel? -Always be aware of individualization when using data to move forward? Can you take the data on individual children and apply it to all children to help the district move forward? -How do we change what we do based on what the data tells us? -What areas do we need to improve?	-What kind of training in practical data collection and use do we need? -How are we creating systems to be efficient and effective? -What data do we and should we use to analyze and make decisions? -How do we know? -How do we operationalize data informed decisions? -How do we focus our data overload world? -What is operational excellence? Can we have a common definition among stakeholders?

	(understand what everyone does)? -Will we have an updated/revised communications plan (current one is well done/executed)? -Do we have an app for our district for communications? -Need to listen to as many as we can, not just students. Need to improve system of communication between parent and school. -How can we stop enabling inefficiencies?	What are we doing well, only need to tweak? -How can you guarantee that once supported (e.g., adopting 1 to 1 and after first year of support it goes away leaving teachers on their own)? -What data are we using and how is it being used to plan instructional steps for growth? -What/who defines improvement? Does continuous improvement always mean statistical progress…does the bar continue to get higher (as well as the stress)?	-What are the essential data points we are using for continuous improvement and how are they being used?
Measurement and Data	-How do we discover what students genuinely know (knowledge versus grades)? -How do you measure collective capacity? -How do we measure	-Are we using good data (transparent, relevant, and comprehensive)? -What systems are in place to measure and revise processes? How will we measure this? What data will be used?	-How are we aligning resources to our priorities (money, time and human capital)? -How do we align our resources with our priorities? -How do we measure

	organizational culture? What do we know about it? -How do we know the estimated operational costs of the new buildings? -	-How do we access all of our data? How do we streamline data? -How can we better source data so we can look at trends/patterns in individuals? -District assessments (DRA, Writing, F&P)? -Consistency (scales and progress reports)? -What validated data is consistently collected and used to impact instructional practice? -Wil data be collected separately per school to define each school's needs or combine together to come up with one plan for whole district? -What other data is in place to evaluate teachers? How can we place more value over teacher observation and anecdotal data versus formative or summative assessments?	collective capacity? -How do we provide an excellent experience (academic and other) on a budget? -How do we leverage technology to work more efficiently – save resources and manage time? -How will we deal with increased enrollment?

		-How are teachers using data? -How does data drive course offerings and priorities? -Student engagement data? -How to keep better track of graduates? -How receive testing, grading and general student feedback? -How to use Gallup poll results? -How is a variety of data being equally respected (i.e., arts/PE teachers have and use different data and resources)?	
Processes	-How can we ensure all students are receiving the guaranteed curriculum? -How can we streamline processes (within and between departments)? -How do we have processes as a large district while feeling personalized?	-What are protocols for reviewing data and inform planning? -How can we use the information we learn and assess from our students and create a personal history/narrative so we are not consistently reinventing the wheel? -Are we leveraging data in a meaningful	-How do we listen and support staff regarding their ideas and improvements? -How do we grow collective capacity? -What systems and protocols do we have in place in comparison to other districts of similar size and what impact this

	-How do we continue to be responsive to a rapidly changing world? -Why do we not have standard operating procedures?	way or are we afraid to use it? -How does the data we receive impact our instruction on a daily basis? -How can we look at data w/o letting it define us? -How can we support teachers in looking at data to make intentional teaching moves (rather than following a program)? -How do we use data to foster collaboration and not competition? -How are teachers given the time (space) to reflect on data and its effect on instruction? -What norming systems do we have to uniformly analyze student data (elementary)?	has on student and staff engagement? -How can we make our budget and staffing process more transparent so staff can make reasonable and informed requests?
Conditions and Culture	-How do we continue to improve and avoid initiative fatigue? -How do we ensure that the learning culture	-How can we work as a collaborative community to help each other improve (time, place, and accountability)? -Are staff needs being met with PD? Are we asking for	-What do we envision for our culture to look like and feel like? -How do we engage all stakeholders and become

	adapts to our new spaces? -Improve culture of respect. -Opportunities for student voices to be heard. -Can we visit innovative schools (consider what is happening outside of UA)? -How do we create a culture of ruthless prioritization?	feedback from all staff members? -How do we know what Professional Learning opportunities teachers need? Want? How do we collect data on PD and how do we respond to it? -How can we maximize Professional Learning for teachers with so many expectations on a daily basis? How do we foster professional growth? -We need PD on how to use data effectively? -District wide master schedule? -Who/what determines the priority (data, professional learning, instruction, assessments)? -How do we respond to data trends from Quality Profile? -Are we using all personnel to full potential and operating efficiently?	ambassadors of our culture? -How do we help focus our energy – less is more (Essentialism)? -How are we asking staff to reflect and adjust instruction and assessment collaboratively? -How do we study and modify students' schedules to making learning accessible for all?

		-How do we avoid having too many initiatives occurring at the same time? -What are the tier 2 structures in place/available to provide a continuum of support? -What is the district commitment to provide time for teachers to analyze whatever data has been collected?	