

## Kaizen Corner

Systemically, when we focus on improvement, we are implementing change. By integrating a culture of continuous improvement, we are incorporating a way of doing things rather than adding to the work we are already doing. Improvement efforts, or improvement projects, intentionally focus on change and impact people at all levels. This results, in part, in establishing change agents, those who lean into and support the change, and change resisters, those who are resisting the changes we are trying to implement.

So, what is project management and how does it tie into this? Project management is the utilization of knowledge, skills, methods, and processes to achieve project goals within specific constraints (scope, schedule, and budget). A project has a definitive beginning and a definitive end while a process is continuous. A process improvement initiative, however, is a project in that we are working to meet an identifiable and measurable objective by a specific time to positively impact the outcome of a process.

Integrating project management into improvement initiatives ensures these efforts are intentional and measurable and more likely to succeed. By integrating project management into improvement projects, we do the following:

- Assessing projects to ensure prioritization and alignment with strategic goals,
- Creating an environment of project ownership and sponsorship, both of which are essential to project success,
- Monitoring the number of improvement projects occurring throughout the organization (organization may be identified as a school, district, ESD, or OSPI) to eliminate redundancy,
- Establishing a standard approach and best practices to project management, and
- Improved planning of change effects across the organization which may negatively impact employees and retention rates.

While this list is not exhaustive, it does present a high-level perspective of the benefits of aligning project management to improvement initiatives and change.

Integrating a culture of continuous improvement is implementing lasting change and positively impacts, most importantly, our teachers and students. Building in the capacity and proficiency for staff at all levels to respond to change and how it impacts them is the result of a well-established change management program that is also sustainable.

Next time we'll discuss the importance of identifying and monitoring performance measures applicable to improvement initiatives.

Do you have any contributing ideas or topics you would like discussed in this space? I would love to hear them! Email me at [christine.hurley@k12.wa.us](mailto:christine.hurley@k12.wa.us).



