

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD



From Good to Great

We must transform our district by focusing on the processes that we employ, rather than only the desired product. Through process improvement strategies, a new vision will be created and district culture will change.

—Dr. David Anthony, Former Superintendent, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD (Cy-Fair) consistently ranks among the top districts in the nation. It is the largest recognized school district in the state of Texas (106,000 students) and maintains one of the highest graduation rates in the nation. Over the past 5 years, Cy-Fair has faced budget reductions of over \$70 million while having to accommodate for growth and changing demographics with more than 14,000 additional students and 17 new campuses. Despite massive financial challenges, they maintain the lowest administrative cost ratio and cost per student in the greater Houston area and are a leading economic stimulator in the community. District leaders did not want to become known as one of the “cheapest” districts in the nation, saving money without regard to performance, and hoped to examine the implications of cost effective improvements as a way of getting the same or better results with fewer resources and less funding. Thus, in the face of impending budget cuts, Cy-Fair sought process management.

Cy-Fair had already engaged external consultants for specialty assessments to validate their efficiencies. However, they felt that they needed something different to take them “from good to great.”

Former Superintendent Dr. David Anthony and Associate Superintendent for Business & Financial Services, Stuart Snow, met with APQC regarding ways to get started with Process and Performance Management. Cy-Fair leadership subsequently elected to begin with an Organizational Assessment (OA). This five day Baldrige-based assessment involves an examination of the design and implementation of current processes, documentation and results, and gathers and analyzes information collected from various stakeholders and customers to assess a district’s performance from a systems perspective. It is an opportunity for district leaders to understand the district’s strengths and opportunities, evaluate the sustainability of current initiatives, outline next steps in organizational reform, and incorporate the OA findings into future strategic planning.

Pam Wells, Associate Superintendent for Governmental, Community, and Planning Initiatives, questioned what was different about APQC than other organizations the district had worked with.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Visioning/Long Range Planning

Revising the district’s vision statement and creating a long-range plan that is not only aligned with the vision, but with each department and campus improvement plan. We will create a process for the development and implementation of both the vision and the long-range plan.

Aligning Department and Campus Improvement Plans to District Plan

Evaluating the improvement planning processes and metrics of CFISD.

Human Capital Assessment and Development

Redesigning a process for effective and efficient employee performance evaluations. This process will build upon the competencies and strengths of individuals building capacity in their use of skills which will maximize and improve overall job performance and satisfaction.

Energy Management

Reducing energy consumption by 5% (a projected \$800,000 savings) would allow greater M&O funds to be spent for instruction.

Payroll Process Improvement

Standardizing payroll reporting process used by all departments and campuses in order to decrease labor costs and error rate. Current variations cause confusion and errors resulting in labor intensive costs.

Visioning Survey Responses: What “one word” describes CFISD?



APQC “was different,” she noted, “and therefore beneficial, as they had data that showed that our district was efficient but also had data to show places for improvement. The real purpose for our involvement with APQC was their focus on maintaining quality with limited resources and as a system of support and guidance for continuous improvement.”

Harold Rowe, Associate Superintendent Technology and School Services, saw APQC’s value-add as “a framework that could formalize and structuralize a process for continuous improvement.”

The OA approach initiated a “holistic change from within the district” and helped propel them on their journey from “good to great”. As Snow remarks, “other reviews from outside consultants focused on symptoms of inefficiencies while APQC developed a systematic change from within, instead of just hitting topics or issues. It was about helping us improve our organization and not just solving a problem.”

It was important to have some projects to save the district money but the vision, evaluation, and district improvement plan was intended to help get our organization focused and get process as a part of our culture.

—Teresa Hull
Associate Superintendent for Human Resources and Student Services

Our focus is improving and maintaining quality... and quality is student achievement. This process has made us think differently in everything that we do.

—Roy Garcia
Associate Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction and School Administration

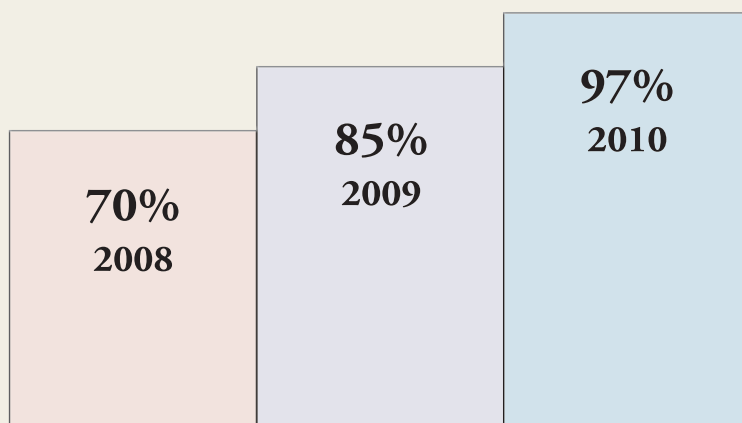
Five projects emerged from the OA that might otherwise never have been selected: Visioning and long range planning, aligning department and campus improvement plans to district plan, human capital assessment and development, energy management and conservation, and payroll process improvement.

The project team leads were asked about their experience. Dr. Rayyan Amine is the Executive Director of Campus Improvement and Research and leader of the Aligning Department and Campus Improvement Plans to District Plan project team. She says that the

“things we learned in the OA and in our workshops with APQC are critical and we want to implement some of these improvements in content areas and into the classroom.” Dan McIlduff, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Support Services, feels that there is “only one job in this district. We are all just a part of that one job...preparing students for graduation and life.”

While many of Cy-Fair’s current projects, and other projects to come, will undoubtedly yield financial savings, district leaders are not limited to financially driven measures of success, and greatly value the changes they have seen since their OA. As Snow shared, “in our involvement with APQC, monetary yield is a secondary thing. We improved our organization and additionally saved money with projects. We didn’t enter into this with the sole purpose of saving money, we wanted to improve the way we manage our organization.” When asked how the OA, and their involvement with APQC, has affected student achievement rates, the Team Leaders responded with a resounding, “**positively.**”

Percentage of Campuses Exemplary or Recognized



With continual growth and changing demographics, Cy-Fair’s standards of excellence remain high, as indicated by the quality of instruction and services and continued academic success.