

Spotlight Strategy: Make Program and Instructional Decisions Based on Data

North Montco Technical Career Center

At North Montco Technical Center (North Montco) in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, the school leadership team strives to solicit and incorporate stakeholder input in making key decisions. To achieve this goal, the team administers an annual survey of its key stakeholders and uses the results to drive school decisions.

With results from annual “customer” surveys, the school leadership team identifies areas in need of improvement, implements interventions and develops annual performance goals for the school. The surveys, which are administered to parents, students, industry members, sending schools and all North Montco staff members, solicit feedback on what is working at North Montco and what needs to be improved. According to Administrative Director Michael Lucas, the leadership team uses the survey results to “focus energy and efforts” on those areas of greatest concern to school customers.

Developed by the leadership team and specialized for each set of stakeholders, the annual surveys are administered online. From year to year, the leadership team may slightly revise the survey questions to ensure they capture the most pertinent data. Questions address a wide range of issues, including perceptions of school safety, instruction, school communication and the level of student support.

Students complete their surveys in January so that the leadership team can immediately address any school-wide issues or classroom-specific concerns indicated in the results. The remaining stakeholder surveys are completed at the end of the school year, and the results are used to plan for the following year.

To help improve response rates, the leadership team tries to provide in-house opportunities for stakeholders to complete the surveys. For example, guidance counselors from sending schools may take the survey while they are attending their monthly meetings at North Montco, and industry representatives may take them while attending an Occupational Advisory Committee meeting at the school. Students complete the surveys in class.

The school leadership team analyzes the survey results to identify areas of strength and areas of concern among stakeholders. Through use of an online survey site, the team may filter results to examine responses in specific sub-categories, such as individual classrooms, subject areas or grade level. The leadership team uses the survey data to drive decisions in three key areas:

Annual Performance Goals – Survey results are shared at the annual school leadership retreat in July. The school leadership team then develops school-wide goals based on the data collected from the survey. Mr. Lucas emphasizes that this approach to goal-setting ensures that the goals are relevant to the needs of North Montco and reflect the opinions of key stakeholders.

Intervention Strategies – The leadership team uses the results of the student surveys to address pressing concerns in the school, such as bullying or in-class issues. Interventions may be implemented immediately, which indicates to students that their voices are heard.

Budget and School Improvement – The leadership team considers the information collected from the survey when they create the school budget and develop school improvement strategies. The survey provides insight into what the community values regarding the school and areas in which the school could perform more effectively.

The leadership team at North Montco emphasizes how the annual survey and data analysis help improve how the school operates and serves its stakeholders. Stakeholders sense the school is responsive to their needs, and this helps to secure their buy-in for new school goals and initiatives. As Mr. Lucas states, the school is “functioning more like a business” because it meets the needs of its customers and creates goals that are relevant to the specific needs of the school community.

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North Montco Technical Center is located in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. It enrolls approximately 1,100 students in grades 9 through 12 and provides 22 career and technical education programs. North Montco primarily is a part-time career and technical center, but it also offers tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students the opportunity to attend full-time. North Montco serves five school districts.