

Identifying Strong Leaders Results in an Award-Winning School System

Logansport Community School Corporation (LCSC), located in Central Indiana, is comprised of 4200 students divided between 8 schools: 4 elementary, 2 middle, 1 high school and 1 career and technical center. It is also one of the city's largest employers with over 750 employees.

The Challenge: Seven years ago, the Logansport Community School Corporation was one of the lowest performing school districts in the state, with a high school graduation rate that was ranked 285th out of 293 school districts in Indiana. Over the past 15 years, many things have changed in Cass County where the Logansport Community School Corporation is located. The community has experienced growing poverty and an increasing population of students who were learning English as a Second Language. This shift in the local demographics created a huge cultural and language impact on the school system. The level of programs and services provided by LCSC was inadequate to meet the new demands of these students.

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Dr. Jerry Thacker
Superintendent

Dr. Jerry Thacker became the Superintendent of the Logansport schools in 1998. With a wealth of experience in staff development and as a principal and teacher, he set his mission to develop the school district into one of which the teachers, students, administrators and community could be proud. Since 90% of the school district budget went towards salaries and benefits, Jerry knew his solutions and future successes were dependent on Logansport's intellectual capital—its employees.

In the Logansport Community School Corporation, many critical relationships needed to be nurtured for the school system to be effective. All parties—the superintendent, administrators, Logansport Education Association (LEA) teacher's union, school board, local community, teachers, parents and students — must work together to bring about change. The strength of these relationships must be built on effective communication. Dr. Thacker knew if these groups could not effectively work with each other, it would be nearly impossible for the school system to prosper.

"We knew we needed a scientific process so we could match personnel with their greatest strengths.

We had to have people who had a great drive to succeed; to create success for our students, excellence in the classroom and in all of our curricular and extra-curricular activities."

The Process: Jerry approached the School Board with his concerns. Two of the Board members were using the assessment tool, Predictive Index® (PI) in their current organizations. The discussion uncovered that PI was a tool that could be used throughout the school system to eliminate some of the gaps in communication and improve the overall effectiveness of the leadership teams. Jerry also saw PI as a means to strengthen his relationship with the LEA.

The School Board unanimously agreed to implement PI throughout LCSC. Jerry, key administrators, and all the principals were trained in the use of the Predictive Index. The first order of business was to work together to enhance key goals and initiatives that would spur student, faculty and community development. Much of the focus was centered on developing support programs so every student would have the opportunity to succeed. The key goals of the Logansport School system centered on:

- Safe Schools
- Student Achievement
- Parental and Community Involvement
- Professional Development
- Public Relations
- Diversity

The next challenge was to identify the right people to spearhead these six major initiatives that would ultimately drive the future success of LCSC. Each program required people with different skill sets and behavioral traits. For example: The Safe School initiative was responsible for crisis planning and regulations. Jerry needed someone who could think “outside of the box” as well as deal with a high level of detail. The Predictive Index was able to provide him with that insight. He also needed the ability to assemble strong teams that would work well together to further support and guide the future programs of the Logansport school system. Jerry explains, “Before hiring any future administrators or principals, PI was used as part of the screening to better guarantee success.”

PI was also used in identifying seven outstanding administrators that were placed in leadership positions. Examples of how PI has helped LCSC with their major initiatives are as follows:

- An administrator with a Predictive Index that showed high extroversion assumed responsibility for public relations.
- Two administrators with PI’s that showed their precise, organized, detail-oriented and conscientious approach to tasks were selected to be school safety specialists and to oversee parent/student handbook development and revisions.
- Two administrators whose PI’s showed they were attentive to detail were assigned to analyze and interpret data.
- Two administrators with PI’s that showed they were self-confident self-starters focused their attention on professional development projects and activities.

The Results: The Logansport Community School Corporation has undergone a dramatic transformation from being one of the ten lowest performing school districts in the state of Indiana to an award-winning school system. It is now a district with two Indiana Blue Ribbon middle schools, a high school named by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce as a Best Buy, standardized test scores and SAT scores which exceed the national average, and numerous student and staff award winners at the state and national levels. The Logansport/Cass County Chamber of Commerce honored the school system with a prestigious Quality of Life Award. After having fifteen consecutive years of deficit balances, Dr. Thacker has erased a 5% deficit from the general fund budget and has collaboratively worked to establish and implement a philosophy of excellent service throughout the school system.

Academic standards have been raised and met by students. Innovative programming has been implemented and learning opportunities have been expanded. Parent and community involvement have increased significantly and positively impacted all aspects of the school system.

The Predictive Index provided the roadmap needed to identify the right people from within the district to lead the school system forward. It created a common language resulting in stronger communication and increased employee motivation. Jerry explains, “PI has allowed us to put together teams of people who can work together and create synergy. It has also allowed us to move or hire new personnel with an understanding of his or her motivations, drives, and needs. We continue to refer to individual profiles to better manage and move the organization forward.”