



McGrath Training Systems

CASE STUDY

McGrath SUCCEED System

Academy School District 20
Colorado Springs, CO

Kathie Crume
Assistant Superintendent,
Human Resources

Changing Culture Through Constructive Communication and Continuous Feedback

Looking for One Good Idea

Kathie Crume went to the American Association of School Personnel Administrators' national conference in 1994 hoping for one good idea. **What she found changed her profoundly, and completely altered the culture and climate of Academy School District 20**, a 21,400-student school district in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

"I went to a session on employee evaluation that Mary Jo McGrath presented," Crume recalls, "and it was like a bolt of lightning hit me. Some of the statements Mary Jo was making spoke directly to my heart." Crume had been thinking a lot about her district's evaluation process, its perfunctory nature, and why it didn't seem to make a difference, despite several changes in the evaluation instrument. "Listening to Mary Jo, **it became clear to me that evaluation needed to be the culmination of sincere, ongoing, straightforward communication over time,**" she shares.

Getting Started with SUCCEED

In fall of 1995, Academy School District 20 became **one of the first school districts in the United States to adopt the entire McGrath SUCCEED System Administrator Curriculum to bolster supervision, evaluation, communication and leadership** in every department and in every school building. Over a period of two days, all of the district's principals completed the SUCCEED training. Subsequently, the district worked with McGrath to train and license some of its own administrators to teach the SUCCEED System and keep it entrenched and alive within the district.

"That is how change takes hold," says Crume, a licensed Academy School District SUCCEED instructor. "You can't have a wonderful presenter



come in one time and expect the learning to continue unless you let it take hold through the people in the district. When new administrators come into our district, we have our own SUCCEED instructors who provide the training. The work that we have done with Mary Jo's materials has become part of the way we do business, which was my dream. **At first, it is something people learn and practice. And pretty soon, it is something they are, it is part of them.**"

Making a Difference through Communication

The cornerstone of the McGrath SUCCEED System is continuous feedback. This feedback is structured around the McGrath **FICA** tools. In their verbal and written communication, administrators learn to clearly state the **Facts** of the situation being discussed, what the positive or negative **Impact** of the situation is, and most importantly, the **Context** in which the situation exists. The communication ends with an **Action** step for growth or improvement.

Over the course of the past 13 years, the impact of SUCCEED within Academy School District 20 has become apparent. Looking back, Crume recalls that prior to SUCCEED, teachers whose contracts were not being renewed complained that they had never been informed of performance concerns. "After about two years, I noticed **I no longer had complaints from the teachers that were non-renewed,**" Crume said. "It's

been more than 10 years since I have heard concerns like that."

When Crume discovered SUCCEED, she was looking for **a way to enhance the integrity of her district's performance evaluation process. It didn't take very long for SUCCEED to accomplish that goal.** "Prior to SUCCEED, all of our personnel evaluations sounded pretty much alike," Crume admits, "regardless of which principal wrote them. Over a short period of time, the quality of **our written evaluations improved dramatically.** The SUCCEED FICA tools gave our principals a format for thinking through what they wanted to say."



About Academy School District 20

With 29 school buildings including one charter school, and more than 21,400 students, Academy School District 20 in Colorado Springs, CO, is a top-performing district in the state and a leader among its peers.

"The true value of SUCCEED is not in learning how to write a memo," Crume says. "It's not even in learning how to have a difficult conversation, although these areas are covered. **What is absolutely unique and invaluable about SUCCEED is that it is a way to logically analyze and formulate your thoughts about a situation, while staying true to who you are as a person committed to making a difference.** And with SUCCEED you don't have to be an exceptional writer to be able to accomplish this outcome. The SUCCEED methodology assists with organizing your thoughts and putting them down in your own words. It has had a huge impact on us."

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www.mcgrathinc.com

800.733.1638

