Utilizing *Kaizen* to Collaborate with Colleagues & Stakeholders

Principal Name: Mari A. Swayne
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Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)

As a new principal, new to my school district, I spend a great deal of time in meetings for both the district, as well as in my job as a CTE Director.

As we transitioned from Perkins IV to Perkins V, it provided a great opportunity to re-build some relationships and troubleshoot past issues working with 2 high schools, 2 Principals, 8 Assistant Principals, and 20 Guidance Counselors.

I do not always want to come to these critical stakeholders when there is a problem. I want to ensure that we are truly building relationships that allow us to meet the needs of our students. The survey completed by our stakeholders indicated that our students, staff, and parents still did not have a clear understanding of the new pathways, which led me to understand that this was a good opportunity to build bridges of communication by helping without other leaders feeling that I was overstepping.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to find out if gathering concerns and involving stakeholders in building solutions would support receiving more genuine responses to what **ALL** stakeholders truly need to support students as I begin the implementation of Perkins V.

My Wondering (Slide 4)

With this purpose, I wondered what impact Kaizen would have on the relationships I am building with the stakeholders that I work with.

Kaizen means improvement. When applied to the workplace, Kaizen means continuing improvement involving everyone: managers and workers alike.

My Actions (Slides 5-6)

I read several documents in preparation for transitioning from Perkins IV to Perkins V; as well Time for Change by Anthony Muhammad. Although in my role I am not transforming a school, I am working to transform mindsets and patterns. Muhammad's book provided essential skills to support moving forward.

As we are preparing for the transition, we had the opportunity to have stakeholders participate in surveys and/or focus groups to acquire important data to ensure we were meeting the needs of students. ***Comparing what we believe we provide to what students believe we provide.*** All stakeholders were given the opportunity to participate in a survey and/or focus group with concerns related to a variety of questions relating to the following questions:

- To what degree do learners have access to career guidance and advising before and during their participation?
- Does each learner have a multi-year graduation and pathway plan?
- What placement services and support do learners have access?
- Are there barriers that prevent students from accessing CTE pathway programs or courses?
- Are students able to enroll in their first choice pathway program or course?
- Are students aware of resources and supports to help to choose what they would after they graduate from high school?

I set goals to meet/correspond with as many stakeholders as possible:

- Principals: Every other week
  - Assistant Principals: Once a month
  - Counselor(s): 1-2 Times a Month
  - During each meeting/visit/correspondence: follow up on previous concerns, review the pathways process, address any new concerns, and evaluate how we can continue to improve processes for students, staff, and families.

Data Collection (Slides 7-8)

December
-Surveys were built (Google Forms) for students, teachers, counselors, and administrators to learn about accessibility and career planning for in regards to Career Pathways.
-The surveys were administered and links were shared. Stakeholders were asked to complete the survey.
-Set goals
-Met with pathway committees

January
-Tracked meetings that will be held during January-March.
-Held Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) Meeting
      -Focus Groups were set up to include at a minimum (a lead teacher, counselor, workforce development/industry partner, administrator/school board member, parent/student)
-Viewed results of data
-Met with counselors and teachers to address 2020-21 concerns and troubleshooting

February
-Work on scheduling updates
-Review survey, CLNA (focus group) data

March-May
-Continue scheduling & meeting virtually with students.

My Data (Slides 9-12)

My data ended up being both qualitative and quantitative as some came in the form of survey data and some came in the form of focus groups and questionnaire results.

Teacher/Counselor Survey	26/34 Completed 76% Completion Rate
Student Survey	1,755 Completed
CLNA (Focus Groups)	70 Stakeholders in Attendance

Selected Teacher/Counselor/CLNA Questions

To what degree do learners have access to career guidance and advising before and during their participation?
"Lawrence Township secondary students have access to Gold Star Counseling Programs with exceptional programming that capture ALL students and provide opportunities for personal, collegiate and career inquiry. Students have access to school counselors at the middle schools and also have a designated time in their daily bell schedule to intentionally address college and career information."

Are there barriers that prevent students from accessing CTE pathway programs or courses?
"YES…AWARENESS, EDUCATION, EXPOSURE…and public/community opinion. Counselors are often tasked with educating not only STUDENTS about the opportunities in the CTE world and the World of Work…but educating the FAMILIES. Oftentimes, families will tell us their child will be successful ONLY if s/he attends college. We continue to provide real-time examples and opportunities for our students. There has been a bit of an arrogance around college-going…as if a 4-year degree is the only "real" option for success…but that is, thankfully, changing a bit. College debt has forced families to take a hard look at what is REALLY best for their high school student. SO…if we can purposefully and intentionally expose students to CTE opportunities by

the middle school years…and provide programming to allow students to explore themselves and get to know who they are, what they're about and what they're passionate about…we will have more success if finding a FIT for students to pursue CTE coursework and eventually, careers."
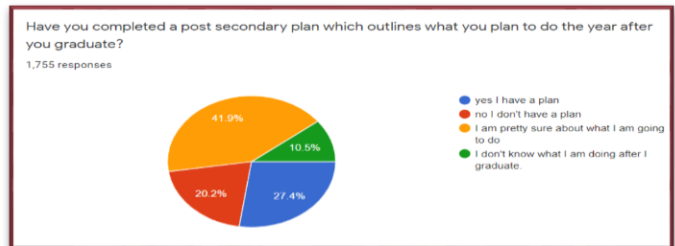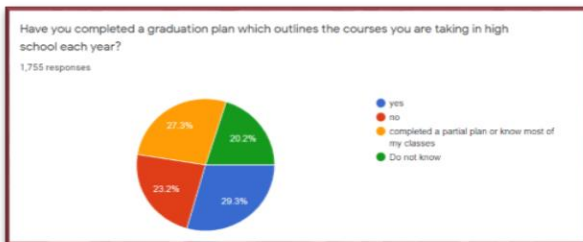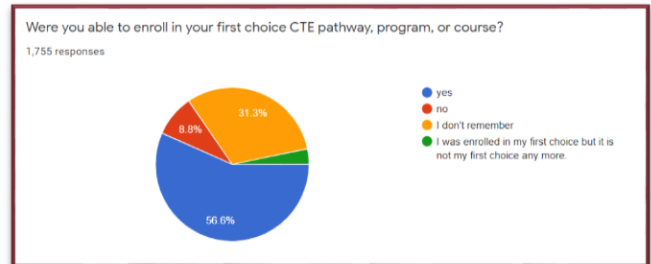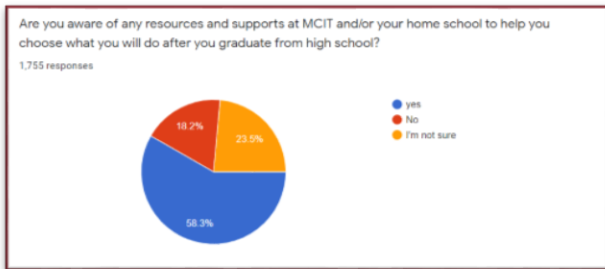
Does each learner have a multi-year graduation and pathway plan?
YES…every student has a 4-year plan as part of our comprehensive counseling program. That plan is reviewed and revised each spring using not only data/grades from the previous year, but emerging interests from academic and technical experiences for the student."

Are students able to enroll in their first choice pathway program or course? USUALLY…but not always.
"Different programs ebb and flow with some popular courses that there are sometimes simply no seats available. Typically, we can find a seat for a student in the 1st or 2nd choice pathway."

Student-1,755 Responses

Are you aware of any resources and supports at MCIT and/or your home school to help you choose what you will do after you graduate from high school?
1,755 responses
- yes 58.3%
- No 18.2%
- I'm not sure 23.5%

Were you able to enroll in your first choice CTE pathway, program, or course?
1,755 responses
- yes 56.6%
- no 8.8%
- I don't remember 31.3%
- I was enrolled in my first choice but it is not my first choice any more.

Have you completed a graduation plan which outlines the courses you are taking in high school each year?
1,755 responses
- yes 29.3%
- no 23.2%
- completed a partial plan or know most of my classes 27.3%
- Do not know 20.2%

Have you completed a post secondary plan which outlines what you plan to do the year after you graduate?
1,755 responses
- yes I have a plan 27.4%
- no I don't have a plan 20.2%
- I am pretty sure about what I am going to do 41.9%
- I don't know what I am doing after I graduate. 10.5%

My Discoveries (Slides 13-14)

- **Learning Statement One**
  Administrators, Counselors, and Teachers may believe we are providing one thing; however, our students may not feel the same way.
  Our data showed that although we provide every student with a graduation plan, only 1/3 of our students say that they have a plan. Our data also showed that while ½ of the students who attend MCIT knew that they could receive additional resources and assistance at MCIT, they did not always feel that way about the larger high school setting (which is understandable). We did agree that both sides believed that students could get their first or second career pathway choice.

- **Learning Statement Two**
  Stakeholders see their role as important to the success of pathways in our district.
  Working one-on-one with stakeholders removed a lot of strongholds/walls that may be present in group settings/meetings. It also helped me understand the concern about "the takeover" of traditional counseling roles due to career pathways.

- **Learning Statement Three**
  Kaizen supports the needs of CTE and Career Pathways for the district. Continuous improvement falls in line with how the life of pathways has been going. With continuous improvement and discussion, stakeholders welcome the change when it comes to the relationship building that has taken place.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 15)

This inquiry project has been timely for me in my role as CTE Director as I continue to build relationships with several stakeholders in my school district. The main goal of the inquiry was to remove strongholds/walls that I have run into working with two high schools. The data that I collected found that all stakeholders have in common the goal of meeting the needs of our students and that message must be consistent. I learned that while the educators believe we are sending one message; our students are perceiving another—so with the goal to meet the needs of our students, that gives me a target to address as CTE Director with the marketing of materials for career pathways.

Kaizen is an important philosophy as it emphasizes continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is necessary as Career Pathways change with different cohorts of graduating classes. Meeting with stakeholders on a regular basis will allow me to review: concerns, data, processes, and solutions. With kaizen, these are repeated when necessary to support continuous improvement. There is still much to do as I continue to plan for transition to Perkins V, add additional pathways based off our bi-annual Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA), and add an additional component of community partnerships & the city of Lawrence, Indiana. The most important piece that I think we as educators sometimes forget is to include our most valuable stakeholders, which are our students.

Bibliography (Slide 16)

- Muhammad, A., & Cruz, L. F. (2019). *Time for change: four essential skills for transformational school and district leaders*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree.

- Hyslop, A. (2018). *Perkins V: The Official Guide*. Alexandria, VA: ACTE©, 5th Edition.

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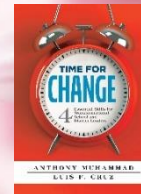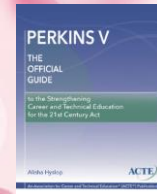
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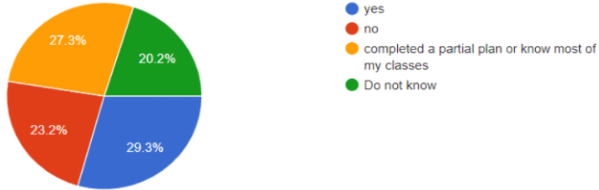- **Are students able to enroll in their first choice pathway program or course? USUALLY...but not always.**

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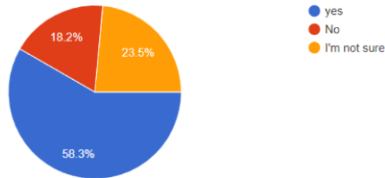
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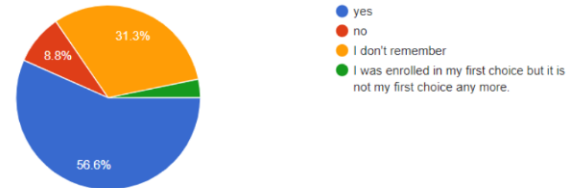- I don't know what I am doing after I graduate.

41.9% 10.5% 20.2% 27.4%

Are you aware of any resources and supports at MCIT and/or your home school to help you choose what you will do after you graduate from high school?

1,755 responses

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12

My Discoveries

Learning Statement One

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> Continuous improvement falls in line with how the life of pathways has been going. With continuous improvement and discussion, stakeholders welcome the change when it comes to the relationship-building that has taken place.

Where Am I Heading Next....

- Continue to Plan for Transition to Perkins V

- Add additional pathways based off the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA), Community Partnerships & the City of Lawrence.

- Continuous Improvement by meeting with stakeholders (including students) on aforementioned scheduled.

Bibliography

- Muhammad, A., & Cruz, L. F. (2019). *Time for change: four essential skills for transformational school and district leaders*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree.

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