



Middle School teachers attend productivity, cooperation sessions

Linden: Learning exercises for Middle School teachers may lead to new courses

by Jeff Bezanson

A team of 13 middle school teachers and administrators underwent a series of training sessions which, according to Middle Division Head Marian Linden, were designed to increase cooperation and productivity and improve interpersonal skills. The sessions ran from August 25 to 27.

The team will use the skills to further integrate the middle school curriculum, according to Linden. Their efforts could culminate in the creation of new interdisciplinary subjects similar to the seventh grade Foundations course. "When students see relationships between classes they will remember better," Linden said.

According to Matthew Cross, whose company Leadership Alliance ran the sessions, the methods he teaches are based on Japanese strategic management methods. "It was something unconventional for teachers to do--focusing on organization rather than education. Plus, I think we learned a lot about ourselves," said history teacher Duncan Wilson, who was present at the workshops.

According to Linden, the course exercises also emphasized creativity skills.

Science teacher Jeffrey Weitz, who attended the workshop, said, "We used an interesting process called Hoshin Kanri to come together as a group, and I learned a new way of bringing a group together."

Math teacher Carolyn Bucci said, "It was an excellent way to start the team program.

We learned how to step back and try a new approach to initiating change."

Cross has been involved in training and organizing groups for four years. Cross says he began his career in education by teaching the principles of American educational theorist and consultant Dr. W Edwards Deming.

"In 1950, Dr. Deming gave Japan's businesses the quality standards that they are known for today," said Cross. "He also wrote the quality standards for military equipment in America during World War II."

According to Cross, the highest award for quality standards in Japan is named in honor of Dr. Deming.

Two years ago, Cross formed his own consulting organization. Cross said, "I train along Deming's philosophy. His idea was to optimize an entire operation over time by emphasizing cooperation and collaboration over win-lose competition, as it is imperative to utilize the wisdom of everyone in an organization."

Cross said of his work, "It inspires, informs, and motivates organizations to exceed their objectives in the shortest amount of time with a minimum of waste for profound results."

Weitz said, "He helped those that are working hard for the Middle School get a clearer picture of what to do, and people who hadn't worked together before got an opportunity to work together."

Anne Galicich, who will be teaching eighth grade English this year, said, "I got a chance to reflect and listen to my colleagues. It was a good way to start the year."