with a better approach. Anyone who looks back on their work with satisfaction is either a fool or someone who hasn’t learned anything. Ellen Glasgow once said, “No idea is so antiquated that it was not once modern. No idea is so modern that it will not someday be antiquated.” By focusing on improving leading measures instead of pushing the latest reform initiative, we are able to deeply embed continuous improvement practices.

Our Results
Butler Tech has been able to improve its student performance results from near the worst in Ohio to among the best in six years. This dramatic improvement in student success occurred at the same time the district doubled its full-time equivalent student enrollment from 1,615 to nearly 3,400. The district continues to be one of the lowest cost (per pupil) career-technical districts in Ohio as well. All of the hard work is paying off: The institution earned the prestigious Achievement of Excellence Award from Ohio’s Baldrige Quality program for its work in organizational quality and student performance improvements. We are currently using the National Baldrige Quality Award program as a feedback system to further improve our processes and our performance.

Staying Focused on Student Success
We evaluate our work by the number of students who succeed. We assure student success by using leading measures to monitor the quality of our work. Our approach of always coming back to student success as the only measure of excellence keeps the leading measures a useful feedback system for improving processes. It also assures we don’t forget what is most important—our students.

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Figure C: Leading Measures
1. Alignment of board actions to board policy.
2. Policy quality.
3. Quality of curriculum as determined by PDK criteria.
4. Student engagement in instruction aligned to content in an approved course of study.
5. Number of building safety code violations.
6. Percent of program enrollment capacity achieved.
7. Budget within board budget parameters.
8. Percentage of positions filled with qualified personnel as determined through an annual audit.
9. Percentage of required data in official data systems.
10. Students with documented personal and social barriers receiving necessary support services.
Quality data can be a powerful tool for teachers, administrators and policymakers to use when trying to improve schools or individual programs. Data can show if a dropout prevention program is working; if students are entering postsecondary programs ready to learn; and how students are doing once they leave the P-20 educational system.

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