



## CASE STUDY:



### THE ORGANIZATION

From their headquarters in Wenatchee, the directors and staff of the North Central Educational Service District (NCESD) deliver educational support services to 29 school districts in four counties -- an area stretching more than 12,000 square miles from the Canadian border to the Columbia Basin; from the peaks of the Cascades to the rich farmlands of Eastern Washington. Every day, the families, teachers and administrators of more than 40,000 students in districts large (Wenatchee: 7,150 students) and small (Stehekin: 9 students) rely on the NCESD to help ensure the best educational opportunities for every student in more than 115 school buildings. Fiscal services, staff development, curriculum, technology, special education, migrant & bilingual education and programs for at-risk students are a few of the many services delivered daily by over 120 professional and support staff of the NCESD.

### THE CHALLENGE

Providing such a broad array of services to diverse communities over such a vast geographic area would be a challenge for any organization. But facing funding shortfalls, more demands than ever on schools for "non-traditional" services for students and families, and feeling constant pressure to help students succeed, the NCESD's leaders and staff knew it was time to be bolder and initiate real change. "We have an excellent executive team and top-quality, dedicated staff," says Superintendent Rich McBride. "We needed to capitalize on our assets by creating an environment that would draw people together, encourage the birth of new ideas and ensure those ideas would be captured, implemented and celebrated."

### THE SOLUTION

NCESD's executive team members joined Upstream Northwest's Blueprint for Excellence Retreat #1 in August 2003. Before the 2-day session had ended, the team members were meeting on their own, practicing what they'd learned using the Blueprint Tool, an exclusive software program that turns ideas into results, then into continuous acts of self-improvement.

### THE RESULTS

Education evolves continuously, so NCESD professionals have seen educational programs come and go. Early success was critical for Blueprint for Excellence to take hold.

Says NCESD's Director of Human Resources, Vicki Trainor, "We could see power and potential of Blueprint for Excellence and wanted our staff to see the impact that it – and they – could have. So we picked a target we knew everyone had strong feelings about: the condition of our headquarters facility."

Utilizing the Blueprint Tool – the unique software program that empowers people to overcome the barriers to excellence, NCESD staff and executive team members "immersed ourselves in the Tool, encouraged new ideas and developed a plan to make tangible improvements to our facilities," Trainor says. "But bigger than the effect it will have on our office is the impact it has had on our *people*. Seeing their own ideas captured and implemented improved their confidence and gave them ownership in the plans we developed together."

Now the NCESD is using Blueprint in a variety of ways.

- Using Blueprint, staff in the Technology and Special Services departments developed a roadmap for more effective delivery of their services – forging a working partnership that has made each department better.
- The Blueprint Tool helped bring together team members from three sub-departments within the NCESD Fiscal group and the Human Resources division to brainstorm new ideas for generating revenue and to use existing resources more effectively.
- The Tool has been used in strategic planning and goal-setting for scheduled retreats, and has been used to help school boards and administrators do their own strategic planning with more certain results.

"Blueprint and the experienced team at Upstream Northwest gave us the tools and training to improve on our own, then to repeat our success continuously," Trainor says. "It works."



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**“The NCESD is a partner – with teachers, administrators, parents and communities – in the mission to deliver the best education possible, to every student possible. Blueprint for Excellence is a powerful tool helping us reach that goal.”**

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Rich McBride  
NCESD Superintendent