

A Bit of Fit Makes a Better Principal

Action Research Narrative by: Ron Siner (IPLI Cohort 7)

The primary responsibility of a school principal is to be the instructional leader in the building. Many daily obstacles can prevent the school principal from spending as much time in classrooms as preferred and needed. As an instructional leader, it is important that I have a great awareness of teaching and learning practices in classrooms. Being observant in classrooms beyond the required teacher evaluation observations helps me gain greater insights on instructional strengths and areas of growth for my teaching staff. In setting goals and tracking steps on my Fitbit, I am able to monitor my productivity in being away from my office and in classrooms observing instructional practices at a higher frequency.

During the course of this Action Research Project, I observed and confirmed that tracking my classroom observations and steps made me more cognizant to regularly observe learning in classrooms and be more mentally determined to walk more. Meeting these goals personally makes me feel more successful. In addition, I feel that I gained greater insights on instructional strengths and areas of growth for my instructional staff. Lastly, implementing more exercise into my day gives me more energy to be more efficient. Feeling refreshed and accomplished also supports strong mental health in a very stressful job.

I did learn that a great amount of my time is dedicated to meetings or tasks coordinated or given from others beyond my building. To balance this, I need to be more willing to delegate tasks so that I create more time in classrooms.

While I will likely adjust my documentation tracking for the future, I do plan to continue setting goals and tracking my steps and classroom observations in future years. These actions did provide benefit as an instructional leader, and goal setting provided motivation.

A Bit of Fit Makes a Better Principal

North Grove Elementary School

Ron Siner

sinerr@centergrove.k12.in.us



Background Leading to This Inquiry

The primary responsibility of a school principal is to be the instructional leader in the building. The school leader needs to spend substantial time to observe learning, being aware of daily teaching practices in all classes and grade levels. Many daily obstacles can prevent the school principal from spending as much in classrooms as preferred. Aside from the teacher evaluation observations and quick visits to say "hi" to students, I would like to deliberately spend more time in classrooms observing teaching and learning.



Background Leading to This Inquiry



Therefore, the purpose of this inquiry is to increase my visibility to staff and students, my awareness of teaching and learning practices, and personal health.

MY WONDERINGS...

Will tracking steps on a Fitbit increase my ability to be more visible in classrooms, build personal awareness of classroom practices, and increase my personal health?

- ◆ Will I feel more refreshed by walking more?
- ◆ Will I feel more connected to teaching practices?
- ◆ How will I structure my schedule to allow for this daily practice?
- ◆ Will I be more efficient and have more energy through exercise?
- ◆ Will daily exercise keep me more motivated to stay away from the office chocolate drawer?!?!?!?

MY ACTIONS

Action 1

Utilizing my Fitbit, I tracked my steps each day. By visiting and observing classroom practices and not being in the office, I will reach my goal of 10,000 steps per day.

Action 2

Utilizing a recording sheet, I will document my daily steps, classrooms visited each day, and my other professional activities throughout the work day.

Action 3

I scheduled specific times during the week to observe classrooms. Observations were a minimum of two minutes, allowing me to have a grasp of the learning of objective and activities occurring.

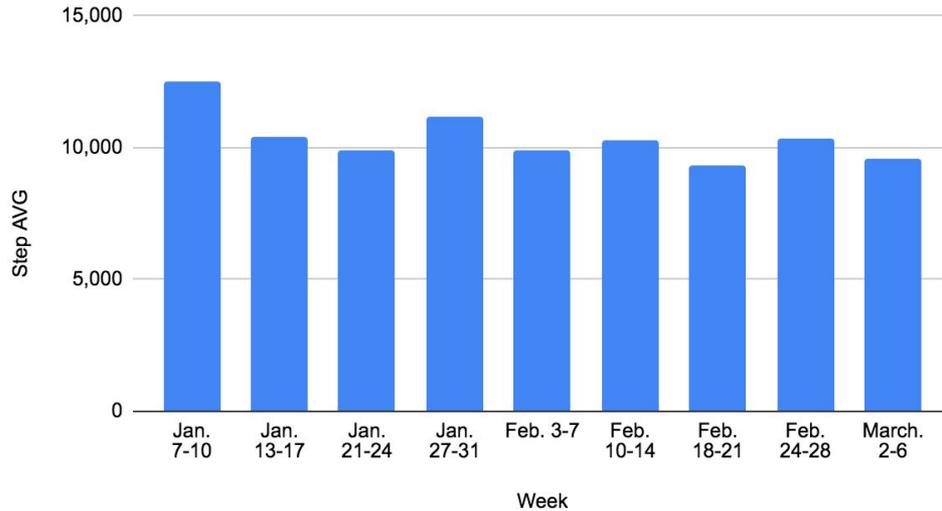
DATA COLLECTION

Date	# of steps	# of classrooms observed	KDG	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Resource (ENL, Title I, SpEd)	Specials	Notes	ER Wednesday (45 min. Early Release)	Case Conferences or Parent Meeting	Meet w/ Staff Member(s)	ESC Meeting or Visit	Student Activity	45-min. Observation	
Jan. 7	10,229	13	1, 2, 3, 4	5, 6, 7, 8		29, 30			15	Music, PE					Szostak- 30 min.	Student Success Celebrations		
Jan. 8	16,373	7	3, 4			26	18, 19, 24, 25					x		Data Meeting (4/5) - 90 min.; SpEd - 20 min.				
Jan. 9	11,369	6	3, 4			28, 29, 30, 31								Leadership Team - 40 min.	Eval. Meeting - 1 hr.			
Jan. 10	12,155	3	3, 4							Art				Gardner - 30 min.; Rogers -30 min.		Big Event	Dolan	
-Jan. 11	7,009	**									Saturday							
Jan. 12	11,371	**									Sunday							
-Jan. 13	13,358	2		5, 8									Scheduled Call - 15 min.	AP - 60 min.; Coach -60 min.				
Jan. 14	9,082	10			9, 10, 11, 12, 13		18, 19, 24		16, Title				PTO Meeting - 75 min.	5-hr. PLC	Dodgeball - 90 min.			
Jan. 15	9,279	0									absent half day; accidentally left FIBit off charger for 2.5 hours (phone caught 1200+ steps, but not when out of pocket)	x		Spenny - 45 min.				
Jan. 16	10,029	6	4					20, 21, 22, 23	ENL		IPLI Meeting - 3.5 hrs.; hostile intruder drill - 15 min.							
Jan. 17	10,437	3	1, 2, 3,								Office 360 (Smogor) - 45 min.		CC - 45 min.; Dobbins phone - 45 min.	King; Feery; Fagan - met individually (total 2 hrs.)				

After a couple weeks of only recording classes observed and steps, I recognized several obstacles that prevented me in observing classes. I then added columns to record my time spent in other areas of my job (specifically, time spent meeting with others.

DATA COLLECTION

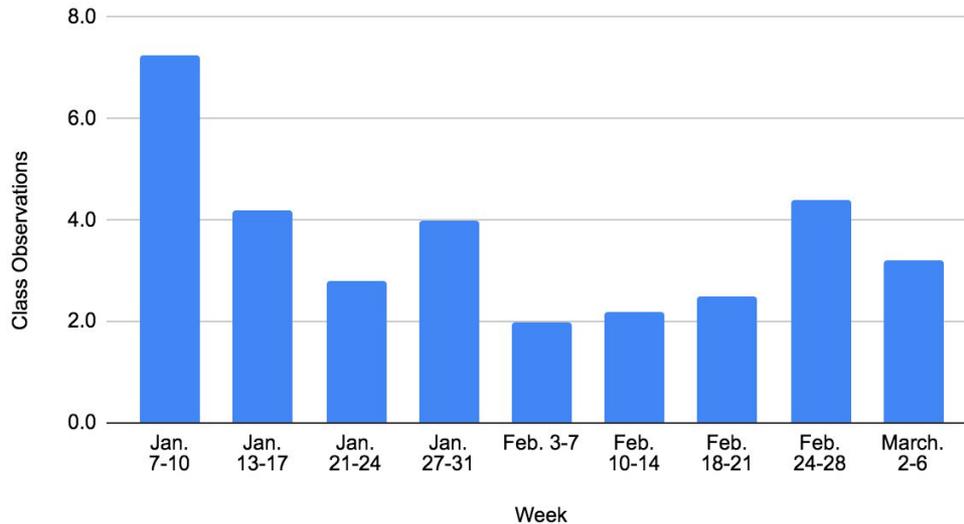
Step AVG vs. Week



Step data was tracked through my FitBit. My goal was to record 10,000 steps each day I was at school. My daily average over the 9-week period was 10,377 steps per day.

DATA COLLECTION

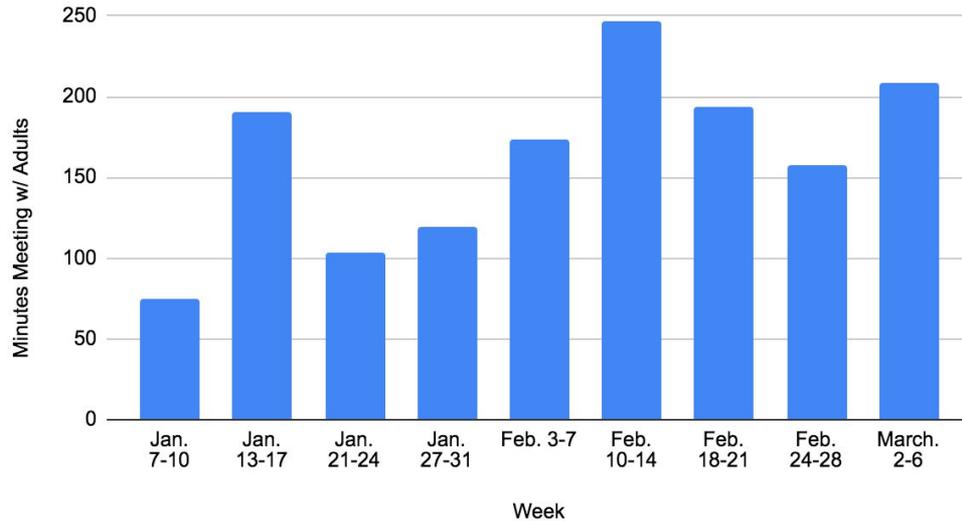
Class Observations vs. Week



I tracked my daily classroom observations. My daily average over the 9-week period was 3.6 observations per day.

DATA COLLECTION

Minutes Meeting w/ Adults vs. Week



I tracked my time meeting directly with adults: teachers and staff, parents, other administrators, and more.

On average, I spend 163 minutes per day meeting with adults during the work day.

MY DISCOVERIES

Learning Statement #1

Tracking my classroom observations and steps made me more cognizant to regularly observe learning in classrooms and be more mentally determined to walk more. Meeting this goals personally makes me feel more successful.

Learning Statement #2

Increased classroom observations and meeting with teachers individually allowed me to gain greater insights on instructional strengths and areas of growth for my instructional staff.

Learning Statement #3

A great amount of my time is dedicated to meetings or tasks from others beyond my building. To balance this, I need to be more willing to delegate tasks so that I create more time in classrooms.

WHERE AM I HEADING NEXT

Continuing to set personal goals for steps tracked through my Fitbit will increase my physical and mental health.

Develop an improved tracking system specific to classrooms, increasing my intentions in balancing class observations.

Clearly define and desegregate the roles and responsibilities within my administrative team, being more intentional with time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ◆ Pink, Daniel H. *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*. Riverhead Books: New York, 2018.
- ◆ Whitaker, Todd. *What Great Principals Do Differently: 18 Things That Matter Most, 2nd Edition*. Routledge: United Kingdom, 2013.
- ◆ Marzano, R., Marzano, J., and Pickering, D. *Classroom Management That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Every Teacher*. ASCD: Virginia, 2003.
- ◆ Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You (10th Anniversary Edition)*. HarperCollins Leadership: Tennessee, 2007.