

Delegate - You want me to do what???

By: Darren Haas, Southeast Fountain Elementary

Contact: haasd@sefschools.org

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

As I began my journey with IPLI last summer, I really didn't know what to expect. I have 2 great friends who just finished their cohort experience and raved about how awesome it was. This obviously got me excited about what was to come, but still nervous about what to expect. I knew there were some things I needed to work on personally to make me a better leader, but did I really want to tell my peers what I knew were my faults. Was I going to trust the people I was put in a small group with? What if I was not a good fit/ mix with my leader? These questions were answered in the first 5 minutes of the program at Indiana State last July. Not only were these people fantastic, but they are some of the absolute best principals/ school leaders in the state of Indiana!

Immediately after getting to know my small group in cohort #4, I knew my life and school was about to change. Not just change, but improve drastically just from learning and sharing with others in the same boat as me. I knew my time was valuable and making sure I led my school, my family, and my spiritual life in the best Christian way possible was my mission. I had not been consistent in any of these areas and I knew for me to grow as a person, this was absolutely necessary. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to delegate my time more efficiently and appropriately to make sure I had a much better balance in all areas of my life.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered: how do I consistently communicate with the leadership teams/ individuals to stay informed and up-to-date about delegated items throughout the school? I knew if I delegated items in the school, I would be able to leave at a more appropriate hour; therefore, have the necessary time for my wife and kids, as well as some "me" time to work out, relax, and socialize.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insight in my wondering, I made a list of specific items I was already doing, but knew if I delegated these tasks, would alleviate extra stress and ultimately free up lots of time for me. The timing was perfect for me to revamp this area of my professional life. My assistant principal just resigned to take another job and I was in position to hire a person to perfectly fit the school's needs. I saw this as a perfect storm and create a job description to help balance the workload between me and my new assistant. I shared this plan with my superintendent and he thought it was an outstanding idea, if and only if we found the right person for the job.

Fortunately, we had a plethora of outstanding applicants. We interviewed and found who we believed to be the perfect fit! After almost one year working with her, I can say she is outstanding! Not only is she a work horse, but she is willing to go above and beyond to make everything she touches the best it can be. Sure, there were bumps in the road and setting the tone and training her to what was needed took some time, but I couldn't have made a better selection to help me!

The first order of business, was creating the major list of items to delegate. These items included: planning for PLC weekly PD sessions for the staff, writing the weekly educator newsletter to be sent home with the staff and students, leading the much needed update for the Vision and Mission statements of the school, taking over the SPED case conferences for all students with special needs/ overseeing the writing of IEP's, a portion of the daily discipline, and working directly with our brand new instructional to give the teachers accurate data and helping with planning/ curriculum needs. The bigger issue is that of how to. How do I: guide those who need led; create and environment that promotes innovation and risk; put more joy and celebration into our efforts; and continuously improving my leadership abilities? (Fichtman Dana, 2009, p. 53)

When looking at this list and the numerous how to's, I was scared a "new administrator" may be overwhelmed with this challenge, but using the help of others and easing into the list made a huge difference. Not only did this work/ payoff, but she also was motivated to take on many classroom visits, attend more than her fair share of after school events, and make many positive parent phone calls to improve community relations. These items were a pleasant surprise, but motivated me to do the same. What a great difference it has made for me and for the culture of our school!

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, 2 very important things I learned include:

- Trusting those I train and count on saved me time and energy in the long run.
- My time and energy is much more valuable to me (now that I have more of it)!

Trusting those I coach and count on daily saved me much time and energy. Investing some time up-front to make sure projects/ tasks were correctly managed helped tremendously in the long run. My goal after giving full delegation of these tasks to my assistant was to meet daily and weekly (depending on the task) to get a full update. I kept a chart and as we met, I put the comments/ checks in the appropriate location to clarify what I knew about each situation. I did this for the entire year and consistently updated my spreadsheet to always be "in the know." The 5 minutes before school or the 15 minutes at the end of the day, literally saved me hours by giving these tasks to an individual willing to take them over. (Whitaker & Breaux, 2013, p. 60)

My time and energy is much more valuable to me (now that I have more of it)! I have saved myself almost an hour a day for the entire year and lightened my stress load tenfold. My only wish is that I would have done this many years ago. Thankfully, my IPLI small group challenged me to do this project and I was humble enough to give away some of the power I didn't think personally, I would be able to do. As long as I stay informed about all that is going on in the building, I now know I do not need to have a finger in every cookie jar. Being a micro-manager is very time consuming and also very stressful! I've learned to let go and keep a watchful eye.

See the chart below summarizing the duties delegated, who and how often I communicated with them, and the progress as well as specific details I may have learned throughout the process.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

In conclusion, I would like to summarize how much I have learned about myself as an educator, leader, boss, and employee. Throughout my life, I've always been very competitive and had an enormous amount of passion to win/ be the best at everything I do. Being an administrator was no different than all the sports

competitions I competed in over the years. However, when I got into administration, it was new and exciting, but I had very little experience/ knowledge in the area which led to some struggles. Learning on the fly was/ is something that I really enjoy, but stumbling many times over the past 5 years has been very humbling and even frustrating at times.

I am finishing my 3rd full year as the building principal of a large elementary school with 70 employees. Coming from a building with 24 employees was quite a drastic change and one that I'm not sure I was ready for. I was informed of all happenings and decisions all the time and knew all the students and families very well. Making the transition to a building almost 3 times larger was next to impossible to know everything that was going on and learning names of all the students and families has been next to impossible. Not to mention, the amount of work and responsibility tripled. There was not enough time in the day for me to get all the specific tasks completed. Because of this, my first two years as the building principal was extremely challenging and overwhelming. I knew a change was necessary, so my action research plan came to me very easily.

Delegating and organizing as well as managing people has been a process that has taken much stress and burden off my shoulders. If you have great people working with you, as I do, trusting in them is the right thing to do. I've been up-front and asked them to be transparent with me about their progress. This has kept me in the loop, but not micromanaging as I felt I had to do in the past. Ultimately, I am very happy as a result of my action research project and look forward to building on how to continue becoming more and more efficient with my time in the future.

References:

Whitaker, Todd. Breaux, Annette. 2013. *The Ten-Minute Inservice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fichtman Dana, Nancy. 2009. *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

How do I routinely and consistently communicate with the leadership teams/ individuals to stay informed and up-to-date about any and all delegated items throughout the school?

Delegated Duty	Communication	Frequency	Progress/Success	Comments
IEP's and SPED case conferences for all students with labels (minus speech students only)	GEI team process, case conferences (SPED and Speech), and grade level teachers sharing valuable and relevant student info.	Monthly consistent updates, but also daily and weekly discussions from Mrs. Morgan (Asst. Principal), who's in charge of SPED.	All students in need are consistently getting the services and attention they need.	Much organization and dedication of our SPED staff, West Central Services, and our AP have done a great job!
PLC weekly PD sessions for the staff	Mrs. Morgan (AP), Mrs. Good (Instructional Coach), and 2 PLC teacher leaders (Short and Gookins)	Weekly meetings (Tuesday at 7:15) to plan ahead as well as organize final details for the next day's PLC. Also email agenda to the staff.	Excellent feedback of the teacher led (administrator driven) PLC's with much relevance and professional development.	Weekly meetings are organized and consistent with clear expectations for all stakeholders.
Math Curriculum and implementation of the newly adopted Curriculum Associates Ready! I-Ready program	Math leadership team, instructional coach, individual teachers, and assistant principal	The Math team meets once each semester and frequently during adoption year. Teachers and AP as necessary.	New program staying true to the fidelity to the core with relevant PD has been excellent. Frequent diagnostic testing for updated student data.	Much attention to the details of the program have allowed us to put the program to full use.
Weekly educator and Monthly newsletters to be sent home with the students	Discussions with secretaries and AP to make sure all relevant information goes home to the parents.	Weekly newsletters from the classroom teacher's, monthly from the school and from the grade levels.	Good feedback from the parents and teachers about the consistent notifications.	Organization and input from necessary stakeholders has been helpful.
Textbook Adoption (subject changes annually)	Instructional Coach and adoption team	Monthly, but weekly or more during caravan and specific presentation weeks	Consistent emails keep all stakeholders in the loop and informed. Equal sharing opportunities is allowed and shared w/ Sup	Narrow down the many options and then presenting to the staff for full input has been a great way for full buy-in
Daily discipline	Assistant Principal	Daily after-school discussions to address serious concerns and who may have been contacted (parents, SRO, Probation, etc)	Detailed notes in Harmony as well as conversations with parents and administration to keep everyone on the same page	Reporting major concerns to the Sup to keep him in the loop is vital since the Board and he tend to get parent calls even when not really necessary
High Ability Program Coordinator	High Ability Licensed Teacher	Monthly meetings and consistent updates during testing times (CogAT screener) and when PD is planned for all HA teachers	The program is growing and getting stronger through PD for all staff and creating consistent curriculum/ appropriate site usage for all grade levels to use for PBL opportunities	Not only are our numbers growing, but the validity of the program is enhancing through rigor and PD opportunities for the HA teachers to grow in their knowledge/ instruction.
Grade level organization and curriculum needs	Grade Level Chairs	Weekly emails and monthly newsletters to parents and administration	Organization and consistent information is being relayed to administration and home for the parents to be kept "in the loop"	Info such as field trips, special occasions/ parties, assessment dates for unit tests/ standardized tests, convocations, etc.
Update Vision and Mission Statement of the School	Advisory Counsel	Monthly meetings to discuss details about what is needed to change for both statements	Counsel presents to the whole staff and seeks input for direction of the actual beliefs of what our school is all about for kids.	Much collaboration and needed input has forged our school together to accurately depict what we believe is true for the current staff at SEFE