"Don't Worry, Be Happy!"

By: Jeff Hettinger, Frontier Jr-Sr High School
Contact: jeff.hettinger@frontier.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

Being a natural introvert, and coupled with the fact that my children maintain that my natural "resting face" always seems angry, I was interested in engaging in actions and behaviors that would increase my positive interactions with both students and staff.

Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to increase the number of positive interactions with students, faculty, and staff to determine if my own personal happiness will increase and become contagious? As this AR project is supposed to focus on me, I am interested in increasing my own level of job happiness and satisfaction by tracking actions that are within my control. I created a daily "check-off" chart to ensure a positive interaction with staff, scheduled non-traditional opportunities to interact with students, and used my school and phone calendar to provide constant reminders to smile!

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if by increasing the number of positive interactions with students, faculty, and staff – will my own personal happiness increase and become contagious?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, I engaged in non-traditional administrative activities that would place me in a position to interact with stakeholders outside the normal scope of being a principal. For example, I served school lunch on three occasions, I engaged in custodial duties, I took tickets at sporting events, and I substituted as a librarian aid for two days. These interactions placed me outside the normal scope of administrative activities and allowed me to informally interact with students and staff.

In addition, over a ten week period, I deliberately tracked my faculty and staff interactions to ensure I was entering into "non-work" discussions with as many people as possible. The purpose of these interactions was to increase my exposure to more staff members in an effort to learn more about them and to share more about myself.

Finally, I scheduled smiles. I'm not much of a smiler, and based on the smile theory – the more you smile, the happier you'll be, then needed to be purposeful with my smiles. I set my calendar to give me smile reminders twice per day, as well as involving my assistant principal to send me random texts reminding me to smile.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, some important things I learned include that by increasing my positive interactions with students and staff, my own level of happiness, or at least my morale has improved. I believe that students and staff are more comfortable approaching me based on increasing my positive interactions, and by making a concerted effort to smile more often.

Method of Data Collection - I charted my deliberate staff interactions, my "smile calendar, and tracked opportunities to engage in non-traditional student interactions. These data charts and schedules were sent in a separate email.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

I have learned that when I make a deliberate effort to be happy then that will in most instances become reality. It is easy to allow the negativity to stack up and to continue to focus the difficult things. However, nothing happens without effort - so to be happy I have to schedule happy. I definitely have discovered new relationships with many of my teachers by interacting with them in non-school ways. Both myself and the teachers have shared personal items, family items, and other non-school things which has helped to increase a positive working environment.

It is important to continue to be purposeful and deliberate in scheduling happy. Charting and calendaring do not take a lot of time or effort, but can have awesome results with my own happiness and staff morale. An important component of my AR project derives from the "smile theory". There are many writers and proponents of the smile theory, and one that I like comes from the Psychological Review by Dr. Zajonc. While most psychologist believe that facial expressions are a result of a persons mood, Dr. Zajonc advocates the opposite - that facial expressions can help determine your mood. Based on my experience and subsequent interactions I would have to agree with Dr. Zajonc.

References:

Goleman, D. (Ed.). (1989). A Feel-Good Theory: A Smile Affects Mood. New York, NY: New York Times.
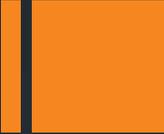
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- Frontier Jr-Sr High School
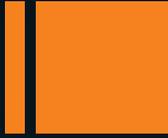
  - Jeff.hettinger@frontier.k12.in.us

IPLI Action Research Project

- Background
  - Naturally introvert
  - "Resting Face"
  - Smile Theory applied

"The Constitution only guarantees you the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself."
~ Benjamin Franklin

Wondering

By increasing the number of positive interactions with students, faculty, and staff – will my own personal happiness increase and become contagious?

Research

- By increasing the number of positive interactions with students, faculty, and staff – will my own personal happiness increase and become contagious? As this AR project is supposed to focus on me, I am interested in increasing my own level of job happiness and satisfaction by tracking actions that are within my control. I created a daily "check-off" chart to ensure a positive interaction with staff, scheduled non-traditional opportunities to interact with students, and used my school and phone calendar to provide constant reminders to smile!
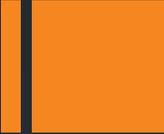
Method of Data Collection

- Chart informal interactions with faculty / staff
    - Create a check off table
    - Goal of 3-4 per day.

- Smile Reminders
    - Calendar pop ups
    - Assistant principal email and text reminders

Method of Data Collection

STAFF	2/27	2/28	3/1	3/2	3/3	3/6	3/7	3/8	3/9	3/10	3/13	3/14	3/15	3/16	3/17	3/20	3/21	3/22	3/23	3/24
Allen		X										X							X	
Barnett			X											X						
Caster				X									X							
Culver						X									X					
Finkbine,	X													X						
Gregorovic	X									X									X	
Holderfield	X														X					
Kazik		X														X				
Knochel		X									X									
Mathis			X																X	
McColley			X													X				
Neal					X										X					
Newcom					X						X									X
Nunan									X								X			
Pitts				X								X								
Plains				X						X								X		
Rogers				X														X		
Seitz								X										X		
Smith								X						X						
Snoble									X			X								X
Taylor									X											
Thompson							X						X					X		
Toby						X					X									X
Walker							X									X				
Wright						X												X		
Yonge							X						X							
Zimmer					X						X							X		

Method of Data Collection

Method of Data Collection

- Schedule non-traditional interactions
  - Lunch server – 1/31 & 3/10
  - Custodial – Cafeteria
  - Ticket taker – 1/20 & 2/9
  - Librarian Aid – 2/6

Method of Data Collection

Staff & Student Feedback – Happy Question

Does Mr. Hettinger seem happier to you? Why or why not.

Method of Data Collection

Staff & Student Feedback – Happy Question

Answers –

Student – "Not when I get in trouble."

Student – "You talk and joke around more than you did."

Teacher – "Not sure about happy, but you talk a lot more about non-school things."

Conclusions

- Random Student & Staff comments:
  - "You seem friendlier"
  - "Why are you always in a good mood?"
  - "I used to be afraid of you"
- Comfortability level on the rise
  - Frequency of drop by visits increasing.
- Personal Perception (It's all about me)
  - I really enjoy the boomerang effect - makes me happier.
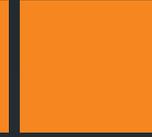
Where am I headed in the future?

- It's not rocket science
- Be purposeful and deliberate
- Make an effort.