

# Eagle Exemplars

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## **Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:**

At LMHS we started to notice that our students were working to get the work we asked them to do "done" and were not really been focused on what they are learning by doing the work. Completion of task has become more important than learning and growing for the course work. We really wanted to discover what we could do to make school about learning and not just about compliance. At LMHS it is our mission to nurture powerful LEARNERS to discover their paths while equipping them to meet the demands of a successful future. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to incorporate skills that students need to be learners into our curriculum and course work.

## **Statement of Your Team's Wondering:**

With this purpose, we wondered what learner skills can we focus on in our instructional model that will nurture powerful learners to discover their paths while equipping them to meet the demands of a successful future?

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insights into our wonderings, we started a conversation within the staff about all the ways we offer students choice in their learning. We also began to incorporate Surprise and Delight into our school and into our lessons to get students excited about being at school. We gained insight from working with The Institute for Personalized Learning and Buddy Berry from the school on F.I.R.E. in Eminence, Kentucky.

Before we decided on what skills our students needed we needed to collect some data. We started by asking our teachers what skills they felt students needed to be able to graduate and have a successful future. They wrote their skills on post it notes and then sorted them into two categories. The first category was skills that students gain from curriculum, learning skills. The second was skills that students need to be able to learn new information and apply it, learner skills. We did this same activity with a group of sixty (60) community members from local business and higher learning institutions. What we found was that 95% of skills teachers and community members felt were most valuable to success beyond high school fell into the learner category. Skills like perseverance, communication, contribution, drive to learn new things, promptness, and reliability were at the top of the list. Once we had the data we set out to create what we call our Eagle Exemplars.

We wanted to create a set of standards that would provide our students with the opportunity to show competence in these learner skills, Eagle Exemplars. We analyzed our data by sorting all of the post it notes with skills on them into categories by putting duplicates and similar skills together. We ended up with six (6) overall categories, Purpose, Communication, Contribution, Wonder, Ownership, and Collaboration.

## **Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:**

As a result of analyzing our data, two (2) important things we learned include: most employers that will hire our students will hire them based on their ability to learn, not on what they already know; students need to be given multiple opportunities each school year to practice these learner skills at the appropriate developmental level. When working with our community members, it was clear that they need a workforce of learners and they are willing to train that workforce to do what they need as long as they are willing and able to learn. We also learned from our research that these learner skills must be taught and practiced in an age appropriate manner. These skills must be intentionally taught and practiced. We knew we needed to find a way to offer students these opportunities.

## **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

This action research cycle was eye opening for my team. The two teachers on our team had never completed an action research cycle before. They learned a lot about our school and our teachers through the survey data from HRS. We know now which teachers we can count on to be the leaders as we implement change and who will need the most help. We learned how much the teachers want the opportunity to visit each other's classrooms and share ideas and truly collaborate. They also learned that an AR cycle is not as intimidating as they first thought and can lead to meaningful and systemic change in our school.

Our next steps as a team and as a school is to create activities and opportunities for our students to show competence in each of our exemplars. We have started on a list for each one and are in the process of selecting which grade level would be appropriate for each task. We are wondering if we should/can make completion of these exemplar tasks mandatory for progressing to the next grade level in addition to curricular standards mastery. We have worked most of what we learned from this action research cycle into our school improvement plans and are in the process of gaining feedback from our faculty. We also plan to hold quarterly community meetings to continue building partnerships to increase opportunities for our students as well as parent meetings to explain and rationalize our decisions to implement the exemplars.

Overall, this action research project, as well as what we have learned from The Institute for Personalized Learning and Buddy Berry, has made a lasting impact on not only the members of the team but on the school as a whole. Our mission at LMHS is to nurture powerful LEARNERS to discover their paths while equipping them to meet the demands of a successful future. The knowledge we gained through the inquiry process will help us work toward attaining our mission!

## **References:**

- Berry, B. (2018, January 8). Buddy Berry, Eminence Schools [Personal interview].  
Krohn, R. (2018, January 12). Institute for Personalized Learning [Personal interview].