



## If Only There Were 28 Hours in the Day - Seeking Balance as a Principal

**Principal Name:** Casey Dodd

**School Name:** Mt. Vernon High School

**Principal's Email Contact:** casey.dodd@mvcsc.k12.in.us

### **Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 1)**

This was my fourth year as an administrator. After spending one year as a middle school assistant principal, I was assigned to serve as one of our district's elementary school principals. At the end of my second year in that post, I was then offered the opportunity to become the high school principal, which I accepted. With having now worked in three different buildings and with each building coming with its own set of opportunities and challenges, I have had a difficult time with finding a balance between my work and home life.

### **The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 2)**

Over the course of this period, I have poured numerous hours and vast amounts of energy into the job in order to be as successful as possible, up to the point of being detrimental to my personal health and family dynamic. Therefore, the purpose of the action research project was to find a way to make a change and balance my work and home life while striving to improve my health, while at the same time maintaining a high level of performance at work.

### **My Wondering (Slide 4)**

With this purpose, I wondered what changes I could make in order to balance my work and home life. I also wondered what positive impacts there could be both to my role as a husband and father as well as my role as a building leader.

### **My Actions (Slide 5-8)**

To gain insights into my wondering, I developed a Google Form which would allow me to track various factors as I began the research project.

First, in order to analyze what I was doing in order to try to live a healthy lifestyle, I recorded the total number of steps taken each day as measured on my FitBit. In order to track how I was spending my time on each day, the next set of questions on the Google Form required me to record the number of minutes spent in each of the following categories:

- Building Management - Day-to-day operations, meetings related to building operations, etc.
- Instructional Improvement - Meetings with teachers, professional development, teacher evaluations and walkthroughs, etc.
- Public Relations - Meetings with parents, community events, networking events, etc.
- Student Supervision & Discipline - Extracurricular event supervision, investigation of disciplinary issues, etc.
- Personal - Time set aside just for me, reading for pleasure, exercising, etc.
- Family - Time dedicated to spending with family

The Google Form also included a space to record a quick summary of the day as well as any reflections that might bear noting. The goal was to be able to capture any qualitative data that may give insight to ways to balance work and home life. The final question on the Google Form was a simple rating for the day. This allowed me to provide a simple number to measure how I felt on the given day. The intention was to complete this form on a daily basis for the duration of the data collection period.

### **Data Collection (Slide 9)**

I used the first two weeks of the data collection period in order to gather baseline data to see how many steps I was averaging, how I spent my time on a day-to-day basis, and how that information related to my daily rating. For the analysis of how I spent my time, I converted the recorded minutes into a daily percentage for each of the activity categories.

Following the collection of baseline data, I will then began making adjustments to my daily schedule to make changes in how much time I am spending with activities in each category as well as the number of steps that I am taking on a given day.

The overall goal will be to be more conscious of balancing out the number of minutes spent on work tasks as opposed to the time spent in the personal and family categories while also trying to be more conscious of the amount of exercise I am getting each day. I will also track how my daily rating is impacted by these efforts.

### **My Data (Slide 10-18)**

Data slides can be accessed at this [LINK](#).

### **My Discoveries (Slide 19-21)**

The first discovery I made was that being more conscious of how I was spending my time after a two-week study allowed me to more appropriately allot my time. Simply being more aware of how I was spending my time allowed me a starting point to try to find better ways to spend the minutes I have in each day. As I became more intentional in my planning and

giving myself certain amounts of time to complete tasks, I became more efficient. Still, there is plenty of room for improvement in this area!

A second discovery was that there was a correlation between the number of steps I was getting in each day and my overall rating of that given day. Generally speaking, the more steps, the better chance there was that I was going to have a higher rating.

A third discovery, and probably the most profound one of the study, was that as I analyzed my notes from each of the recorded days, the days that included more interaction with my family as well as the ones that included more direct interactions with staff and students led to a higher rating for that given day. Not only that, but it also tended to have a lasting impact where subsequent days were often rated more highly.

### **Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 22)**

As I look forward after completing this action research, I look forward to implementing some different strategies based on what I have learned here. One of those activities will be researching more effective ways to intentionally plan my time in order to make both my school and home activities better. Part of that will involve finding ways to be in classrooms to connect more frequently with students and staff, while also allowing myself more time for my own family. An area I plan to research will be how I can build capacity in those I work with in order to be able to delegate duties more effectively such as with the concepts discussed in Genett's book, *If You Want It Done Right, You Don't Have to Do It Yourself.*"

### **Bibliography (Slide 23)**

Fichtman Dana, Nancy (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge - the Principal as Action Researcher*. California: Corwin

Genett, D. (2016). *If You Want It Done Right, You Don't Have to Do It Yourself*. Quill Driver Books, California.

# **If Only There Were 28 Hours in the Day - Seeking Balance as a Principal**



Mt. Vernon High School

Casey Dodd

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# Background Leading to this Inquiry

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At the end of my second year in that post, I was then offered the opportunity to become the high school principal, which I accepted.

With having now worked in three different buildings and with each building coming with its own set of opportunities and challenges, I have had a difficult time with finding a balance between my work and home life.

# Purpose of This Inquiry

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Over the course of this period, I have poured numerous hours and vast amounts of energy into the job in order to be as successful as possible, up to the point of being detrimental to my personal health and family dynamic.

Therefore, the purpose of the action research project was to find a way to make a change and balance my work and home life while striving to improve my health, while at the same time maintaining a high level of performance at work.

# My Wondering

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With this purpose, I wondered what changes I could make in order to balance my work and home life. I also wondered what positive impacts there could be both to my role as a husband and father as well as my role as a building leader.

# My Actions

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To gain insights into my wondering, I developed a Google Form which would allow me to track various factors as I began the research project.

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The final question on the Google Form was a simple rating for the day. This allowed me to provide a simple number to measure how I felt on the given day.

The intention was to complete this form on a daily basis for the duration of the data collection period.



## IPLI Year 1 Action Research Project

\* Required

Date \*

Date

mm/dd/yy

Health

Number of Steps \*

Your answer

Hours of Sleep \*

Your answer

Personal (minutes) \*

Your answer

Family (minutes) \*

Your answer

Quick Notes

Day Notes \*

Your answer

Day Rating

How was today? \*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No Bueno



Best Day Ever!!

Submit

# Data Collection

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Following the collection of baseline data, I then began working to make adjustments to my daily schedule to make changes in how much time I spent with activities in each category as well as the number of steps that I was taking on a given day.

The overall goal was to be more conscious of balancing out the number of minutes spent on work tasks as opposed to the time spent in the personal and family categories while also trying to be more conscious of the amount of exercise I was getting each day. I also tracked how my daily rating was impacted by these efforts.

# My Data

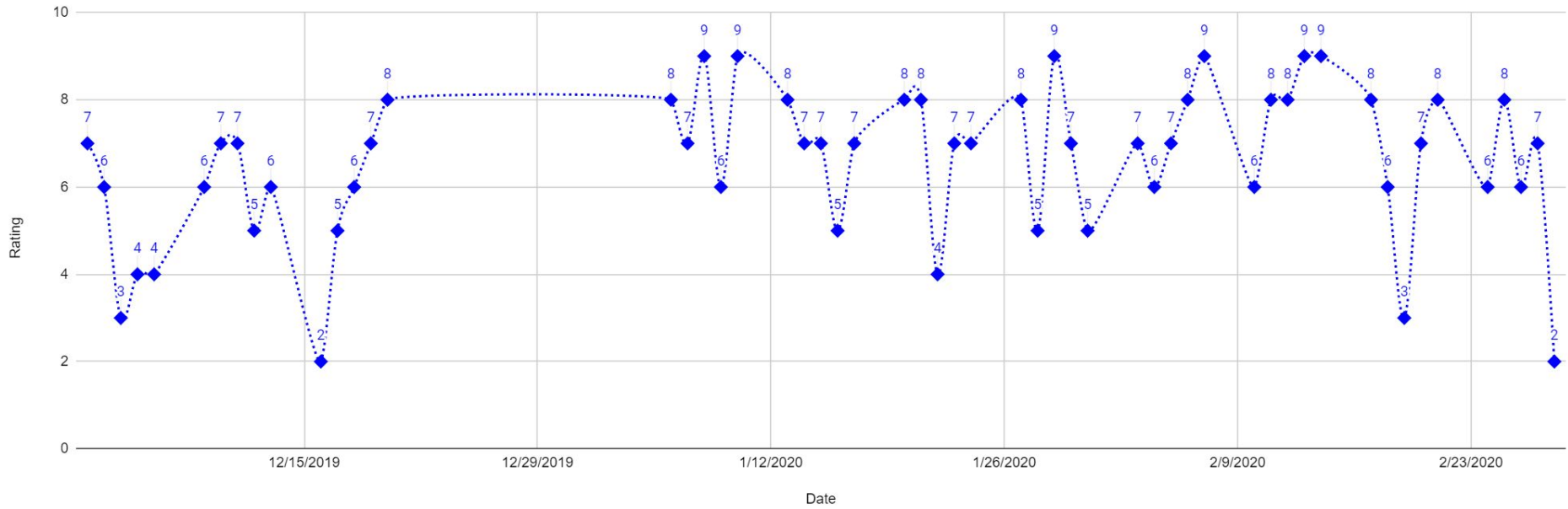
Date	Number of Steps	Hours of Sleep	Building Management (minutes)	Instructional Improvement (minutes)	Points (n)
12/2/2019	6023	6.29	200	125	
12/3/2019	6452	6.52	80	190	
12/4/2019	7974	4.1	105	70	
12/5/2019	7514	6	180	180	
12/6/2019	4489	6.1	210	200	
12/9/2019	7557	5.9	240	200	
12/10/2019	4295	5.7	70	200	
12/11/2019	6939	7	150	200	
12/12/2019	2843	7.1	150	370	
12/13/2019	8708	6.8	230	150	
12/16/2019	6353	8.7	200	90	
12/17/2019	3593	6.25	210	70	
12/18/2019	9866	5.2	110	240	
12/19/2019	3512	6.9	80	310	
12/20/2019	10188	6.25	150	160	
1/6/2020	12998	6.4	120	170	
1/7/2020	9743	6.7	170	100	
1/8/2020	11987	7.5	70	160	
1/9/2020	9439	6.75	120	220	
1/10/2020	7721	5.5	110	140	
1/13/2020	8824	7.1	70	80	
1/14/2020	8888	7.5	70	120	
1/15/2020	10233	8.75	130	80	
1/16/2020	7944	8.6	80	150	

# My Data

Public Relations (minutes)	Student Supervision (minutes)	Discipline (minutes)	Personal (minutes)	Family (minutes)	Day Notes	How was today?
65	75	45	60	90	Catching up from being off	7
135	250	0	30	0	Started day with meeting	6
200	200	45	30	45	Second long day in a row	3
80	110	0	100	40	Jam packed day with little	4
0	140	0	40	90	Had a couple incidents ar	4
40	130	60	40	80	Easier feeling rested com	6
200	0	0	30	180	Took some personal time	7
210	100	0	40	120	Teachers still feeling a littl	7
0	210	0	100	0	Looooonnggg day! Met w	5
140	100	0	10	170	Lots and lots of teachers	6
120	140	0	110	0	Going to be a long week.	2
30	110	100	90	120	Long meeting concerning	5
50	130	40	50	110	Another Wednesday so m	6
40	60	0	50	130	First day of finals. Also h	7
0	330	30	160	0	Final day of the semester	8
40	150	40	60	170	Good first day back. Also	8
80	100	60	80	110	Meeting with TPH (hocke	7
230	90	100	110	0	Really, really positive PLC	9
140	220	0	110	0	Lots of meetings, but gen	6
40	100	40	50	170	Good meeting related to C	9
170	50	90	110	200	Held our first meeting with	8
0	160	40	50	200	A little troubling as we are	7
70	0	50	140	260	Two hour delay for fog so	7
0	120	110	40	210	Rough meeting with Huth	5

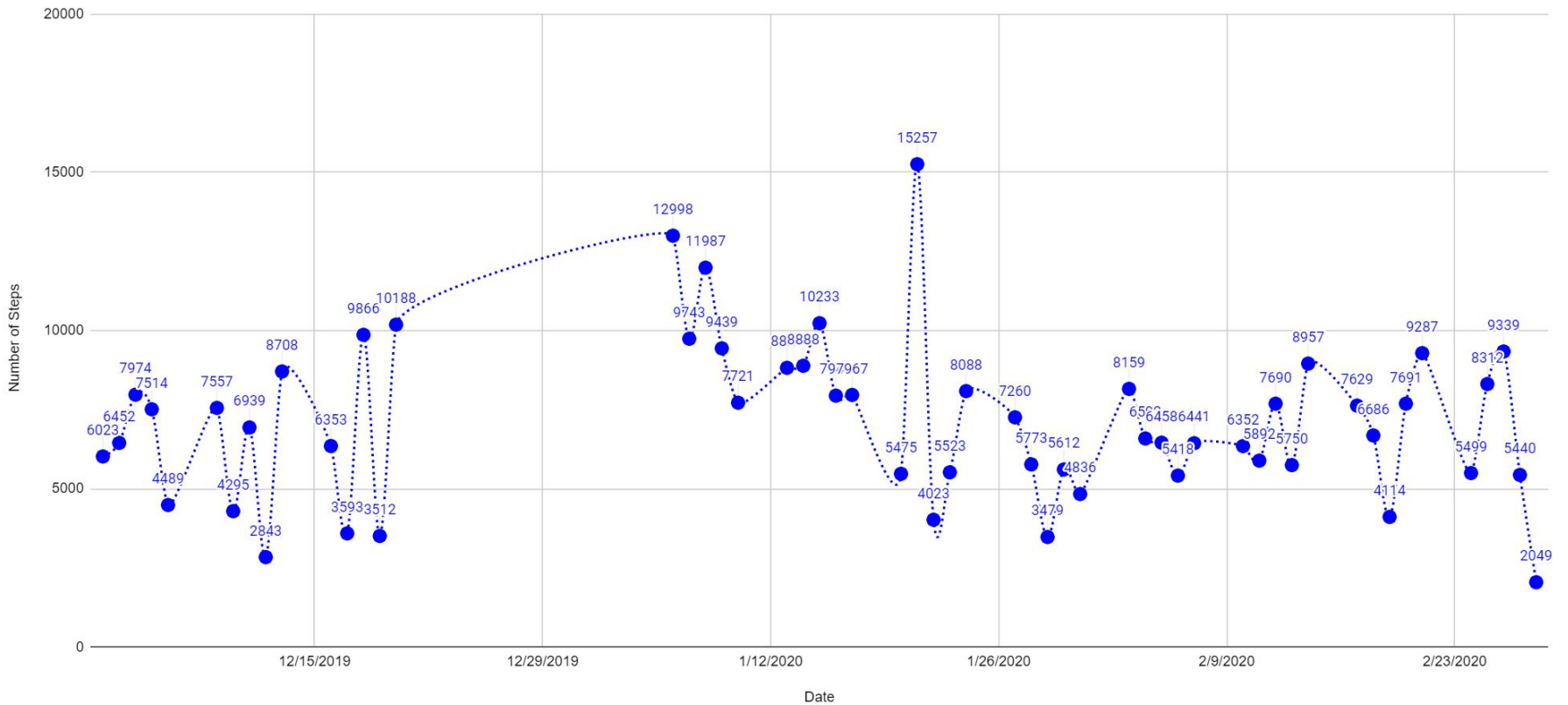
# My Data

## Daily Rating



# My Data

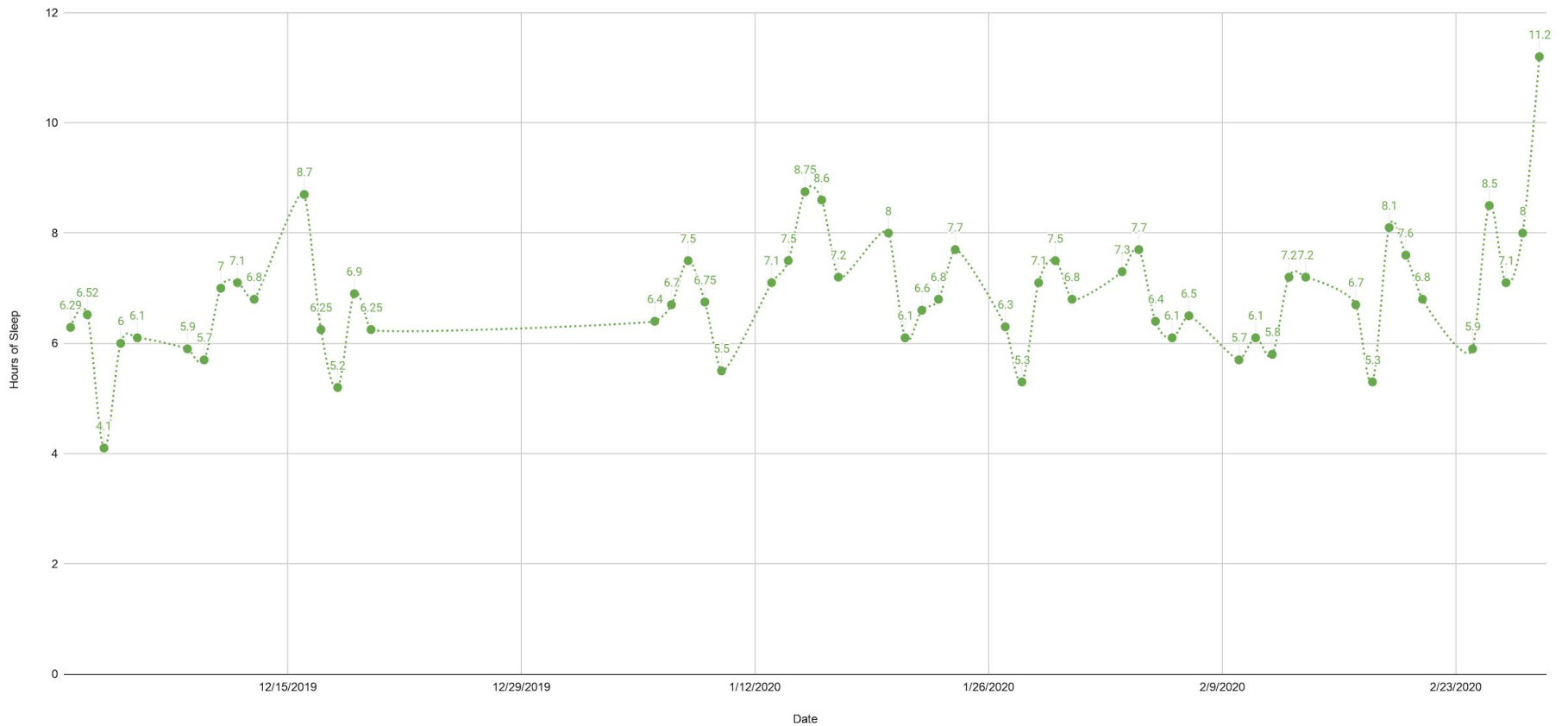
## Steps Taken Per Day





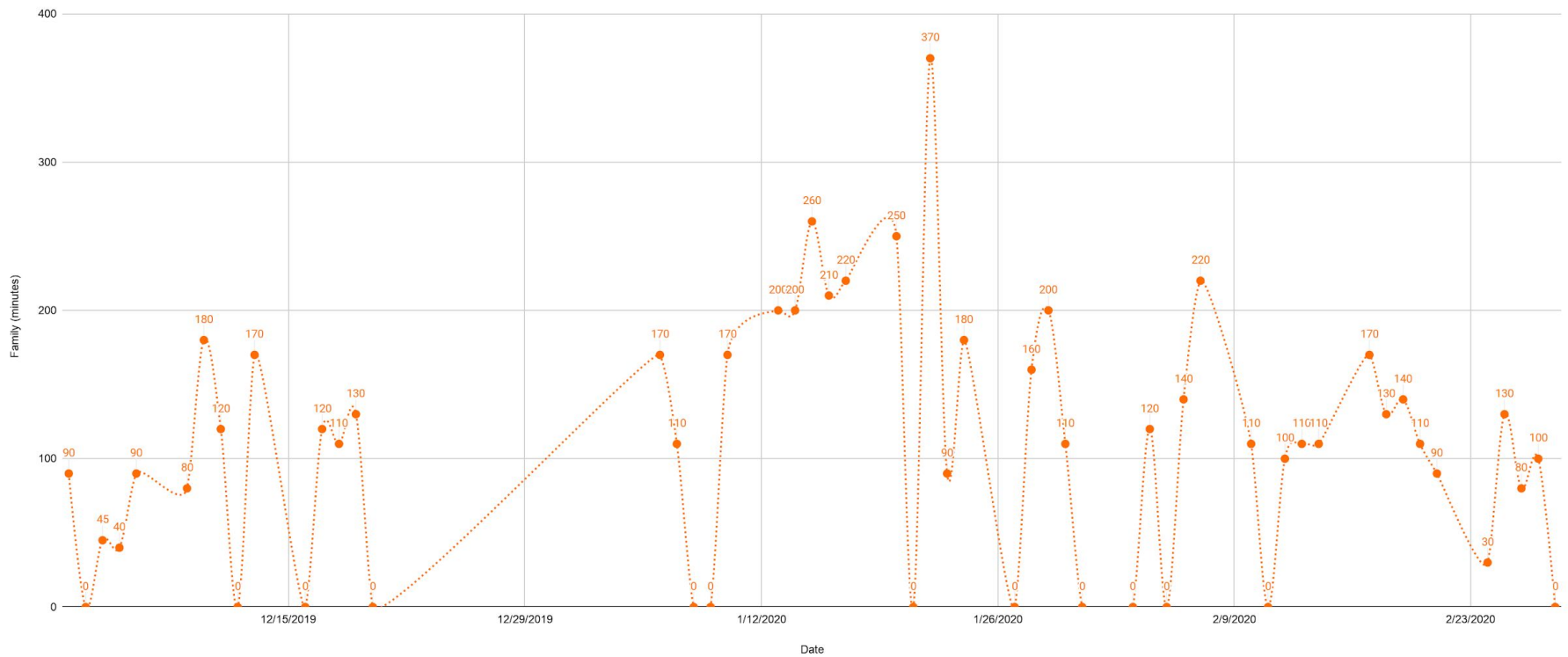
# My Data

## Hours of Sleep Per Day



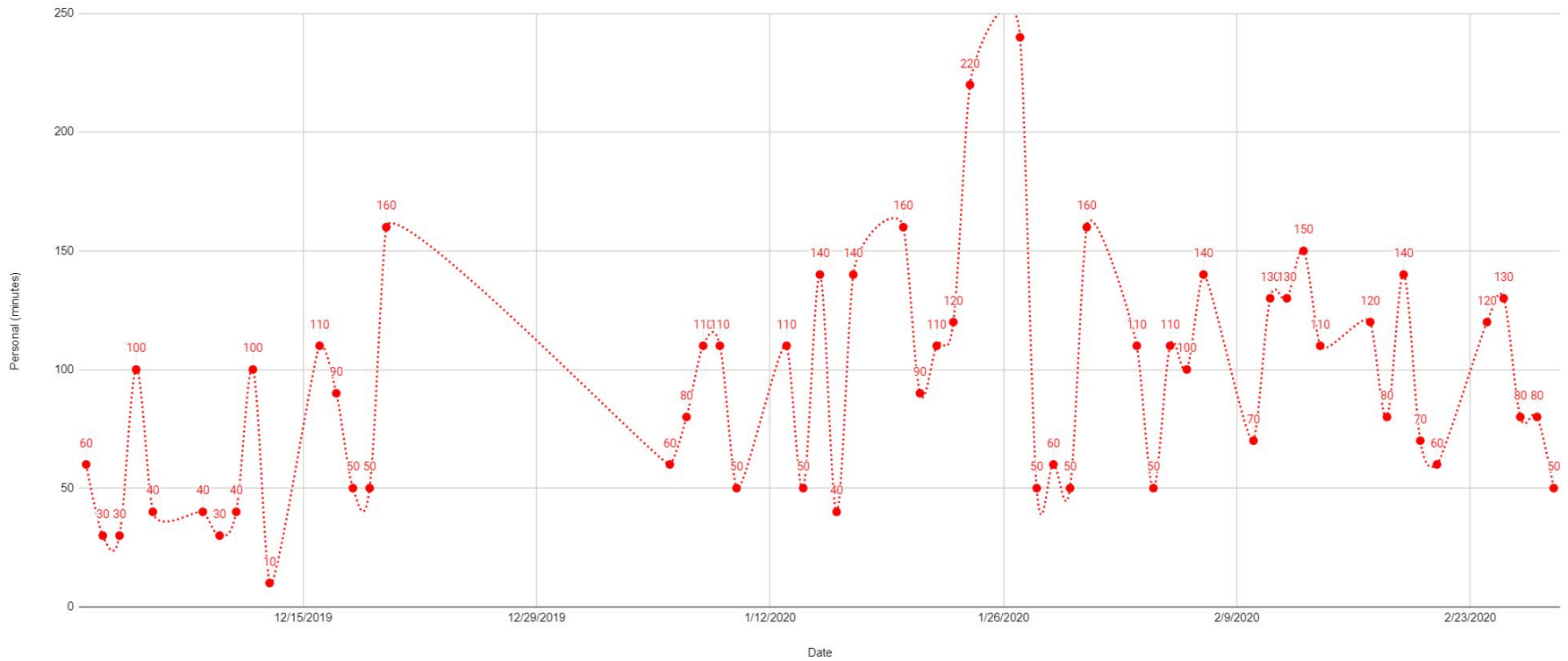
# My Data

## Minutes of Family Time Spent Per Day

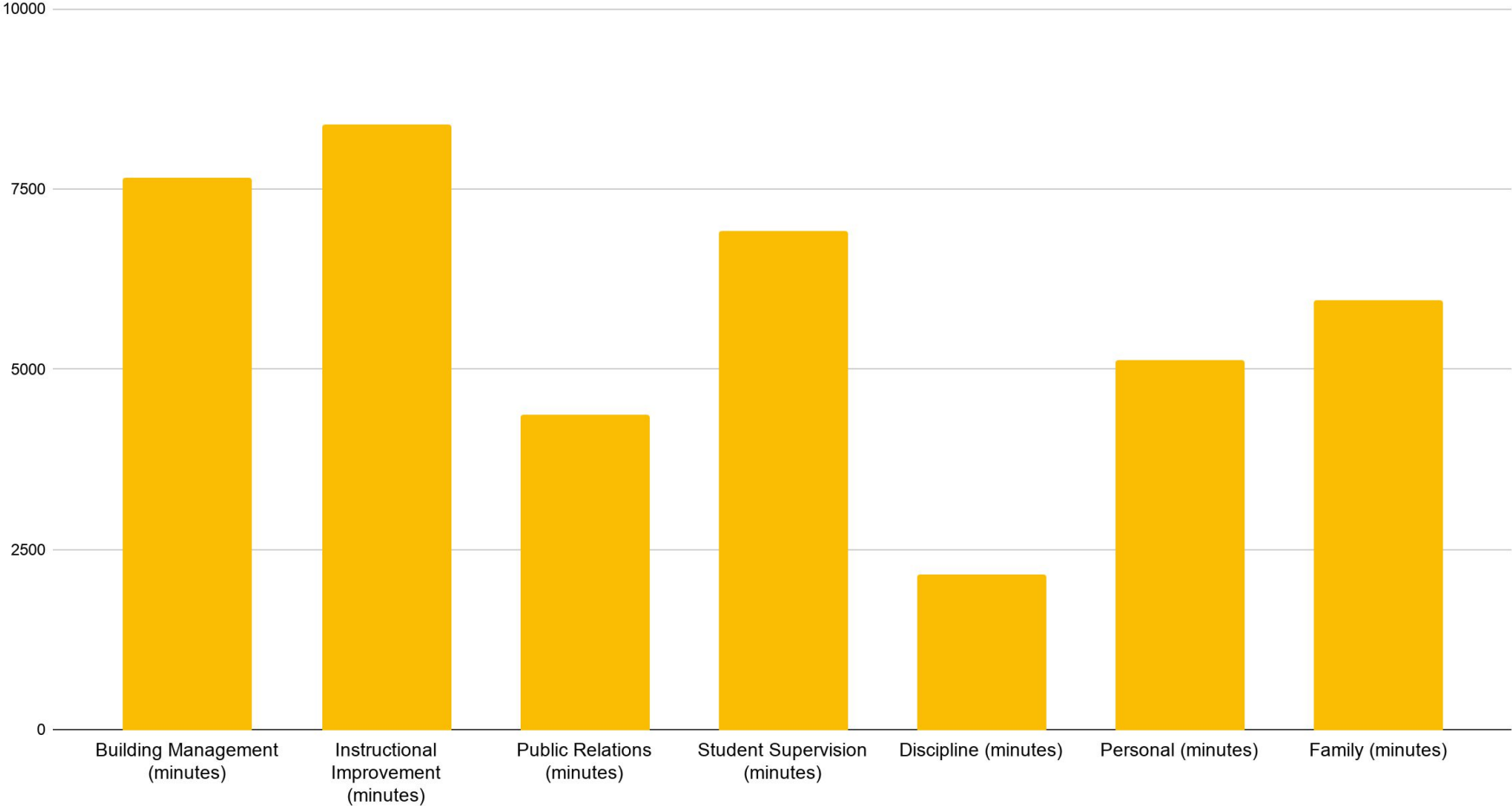


# My Data

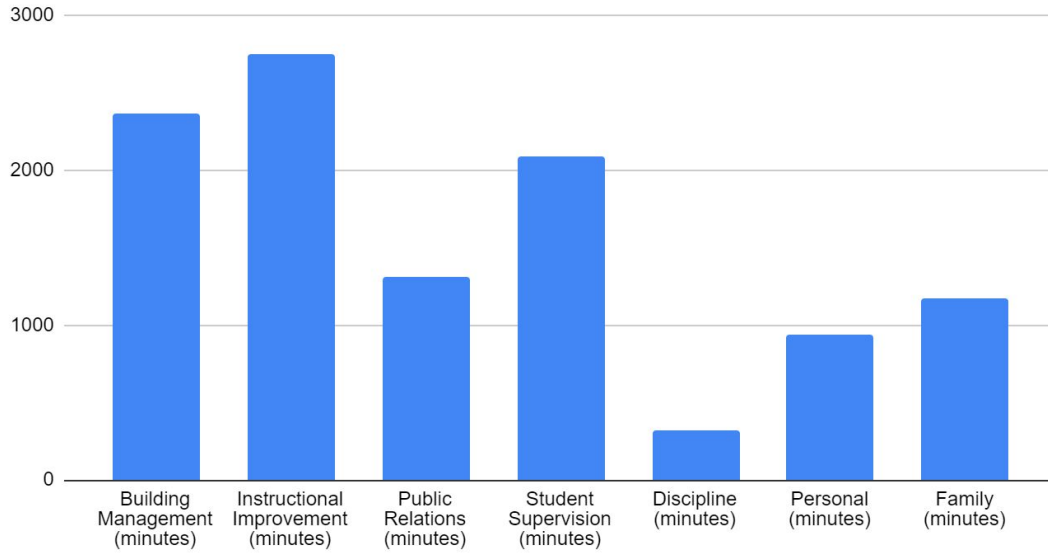
## Minutes of Personal Time Per Day



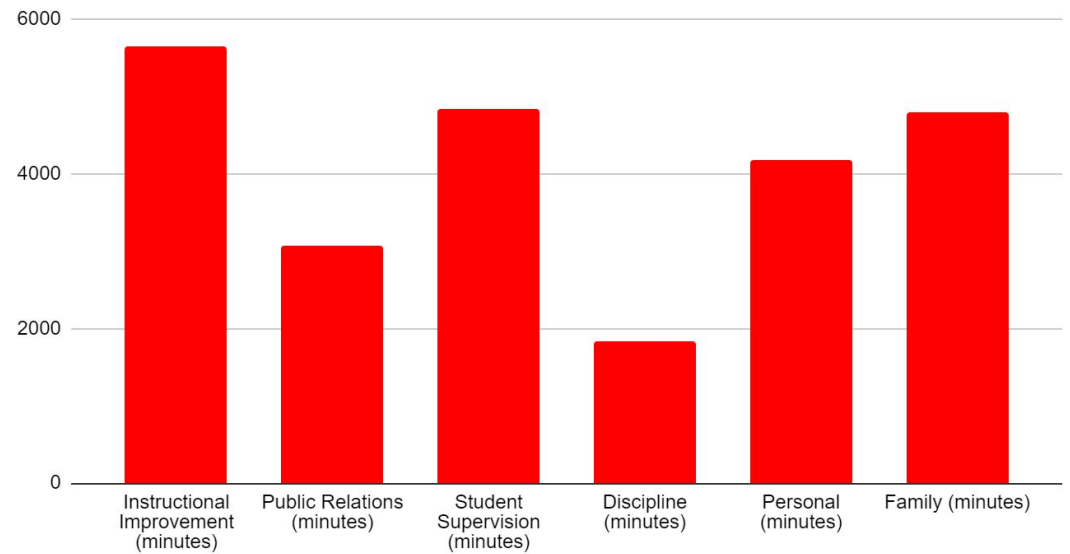
# Breakdown of Total Minutes Per Category



## December 2019



## January & February 2020



# My Discoveries

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- I found that being more conscious of how I was spending my time after a two-week study allowed me to more appropriately allot my time.
  - *Being aware of how my time was spent gave me a starting point.*
  - *I need to find ways to be more intentional with planning my time.*

# My Discoveries

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- I found that the days that I was not able to get as many steps in that my daily rating tended to be lower as well.
  - *The physical movement seemed to allow me to refocus and be more productive.*
  - *The exercise appeared to impact my rating.*
  - *I will be looking to include more opportunities for exercise as I plan for next school year.*

# My Discoveries

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- I found through analysis of my notes that on the days where I had more interaction with my family as well as with students at school, that the daily rating tended to be higher and had a lasting impact over the course of the next few days.
  - *A pleasant surprise...*
  - *Why I am doing this in the first place...*



# Where Am I Heading Next

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- Intentional planning, both with school activities and at home
- Finding the time to connect with students, staff, AND family
- Building capacity for delegating duties

# Bibliography

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Fichtman Dana, Nancy (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge - the Principal as Action Researcher*. California: Corwin

Genett, D. (2016). *If You Want It Done Right, You Don't Have to Do It Yourself*. Quill Driver Books, California.