

I'm Starting With the Man in the Mirror

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

I experienced a great deal of personal success through reflection during the mini phase of the project. I wondered if I could achieve similar success and growth specifically in my professional capacity by implementing the same type of regular, intentional reflection. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to discover what affect continued, focused, and intentional reflection would have on my effectiveness as a leader.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if I could improve my personal leadership capacity by implementing regular, intentional written reflection upon my own practices.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I created a specific focus. My focus was to better “nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration and trust”. My chosen vehicle for reflection was an app called “Day One” that I had used previously during the mini-phase of the project. My goal was three professional reflections per week. I often used a picture to help prime my thinking. The app stored my reflections and I could periodically review them from time to time. I also created a spreadsheet to keep track of any changes I added to my practices that resulted from the reflection process.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two two important things I learned include: One, written reflection helped me to not only better develop ideas and strategies for my professional practice, but it also ensured that my thoughts and reflections on how I could improve did not get lost in all of the everyday noise that accompanies a leadership position in a public school building. Going back through my reflections provided a means of accountability (or perhaps just a reminder) for me to follow through on implementing the ideas that previously flashed through my head. This led to the implementation of several ideas that may have never gone beyond the "random thought" stage before. I created a simple spreadsheet that kept track of the specific actions or strategies that came as a direct or indeirect result of reflection.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11Amxxu1jdEcknRsUi16moJq8B9U5rDY-9a_1B3dVgVY

Second, I found that regular reflection helped to keep me focused on the things that I consider most important, what I would call my personal "pillars". There are a seemingly infinite number of distractions in this profession and many of them can seem incredibly important. I found that regular reflection helped me to filter through daily events and better discern between those that were truly important versus those there were merely urgent. One example of this is an excerpt from one of the more abstract reflections that I had during this process: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BwMd3mlsy0fdTIJLZ1ZEeE56bjg>

"Even if judgement day is around the corner, plant a seed"

There are times when it feels like we scratch and claw for years to build and maintain something important yet precarious, and in an instant, someone else can come along and in a whirlwind of ignorance and cruelty shatter it into pieces.

There have been more times lately that I've felt this way than normal, which is why the above quote caught my eye.

It's reassuring to remember that much of what we do and many of our so-called accomplishments are acts of faith. I find it uplifting to remember this and to stay the course. If I believe in what I'm doing, I will endure."

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Focus doesn't happen by accident, and long ago I decided what I know to be important about the work that I do and the profession to which I belong. What changed for me when I accepted the role of building administrator was the degree to which others attempted to influence my focus on those core values, and in some cases, what those core values were. I've found that it is vital for me to find both a filter for this institutional noise as well as a regular check on my own position in relation to my own "north stars", those core values that are there to guide me. Regular reflection proved useful as a tool for both of these things. It will be helpful to me if I continue to engage in consistent, focused reflection on my professional practices.

My reflections helped me to see and be critical of my communication with the teachers in my building. I need to model honest and healthy communication practices with staff, and my reflections helped me to find more effective ways to do this.

My reflections have aided me in becoming a better communicator, but the potential for focused reflection is greater than just this one area. In the future I can continue to focus on my communication skills and practices, but could also identify other areas of weakness in my practice, and similarly focus my attention there. My research has led me to believe that reflection has a great deal of potential to continue to my own self improvement journey, or that of anyone else as well.

References:

N/A

I'm Starting With the Man in the Mirror - Sheet1

Personal Life	Professional Practice	
health and fitness	Staff input-monthly anonymous survey	
date night	"Princetagram" and Twitter Boards	
family health "Sunday Funday"	Trauma informed school	
	Regular thank you notes to staff	
	Staff "tiger award"	
	video observations	
	Regular invitations to staff to speak privately with me	
	Regularly scheduled and formatted meetings with building rep	

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