

# Keeping My Tank Full

Name of School: East Central High School

Principal's Name: Tom Black

Principal's Email: [tblack@sunmandearborn.k12.in.us](mailto:tblack@sunmandearborn.k12.in.us)



# Background Leading to this Inquiry

Since transitioning from the classroom and athletic realm into administration six years ago, I have consistently witnessed and personally felt the strains/stresses of work. The desire to do well in one's profession and perhaps even more important in the role of leadership in education, the desire to do well for others is very real and sometimes overwhelming considering the needs of so many. The struggle to find balance between work and life adds to the strain/stress. And yet, only in that balance/flow is where productivity and success truly exist...thus...the struggle.



# Purpose of This Inquiry

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to focus on time-management/balancing work and life (keeping my own tank full). Could this focus allow me to feel like, and ultimately be, a more productive and successful building leader and an instructional leader...will it help me maintain “flow” (Pink, 2011)?



# My Wondering

My wondering focused on the challenges of task management in a large building with multiple needs/goals. Having worked in a large setting the past 5 years and knowing the difficulty in managing building/staff/curriculum/community while prioritizing teaching and learning, I was well aware of how many managerial tasks would inevitably take huge amounts of time and center-stage, and the focus on teaching and learning would fall behind in level of priority. My hope was that balancing work/life and/or personal/professional priorities would ultimately lead to fewer periods of burnout and longer periods of innovation/growth...“flow” (Pink, 2011) in the area of teaching and learning...could I be a better leader by keeping my own tank full?



# My Actions

- Carve out regular time to exercise 5 days per week (at least 30 minutes)
- Commit to consistent times for reading educational literature (at least 30 minutes per day)
- Respect family-time both in the evening and on the weekends
- Measure sleep habits throughout the AR process
- Chart difference in *time* from previous job to new job



# Data Collection

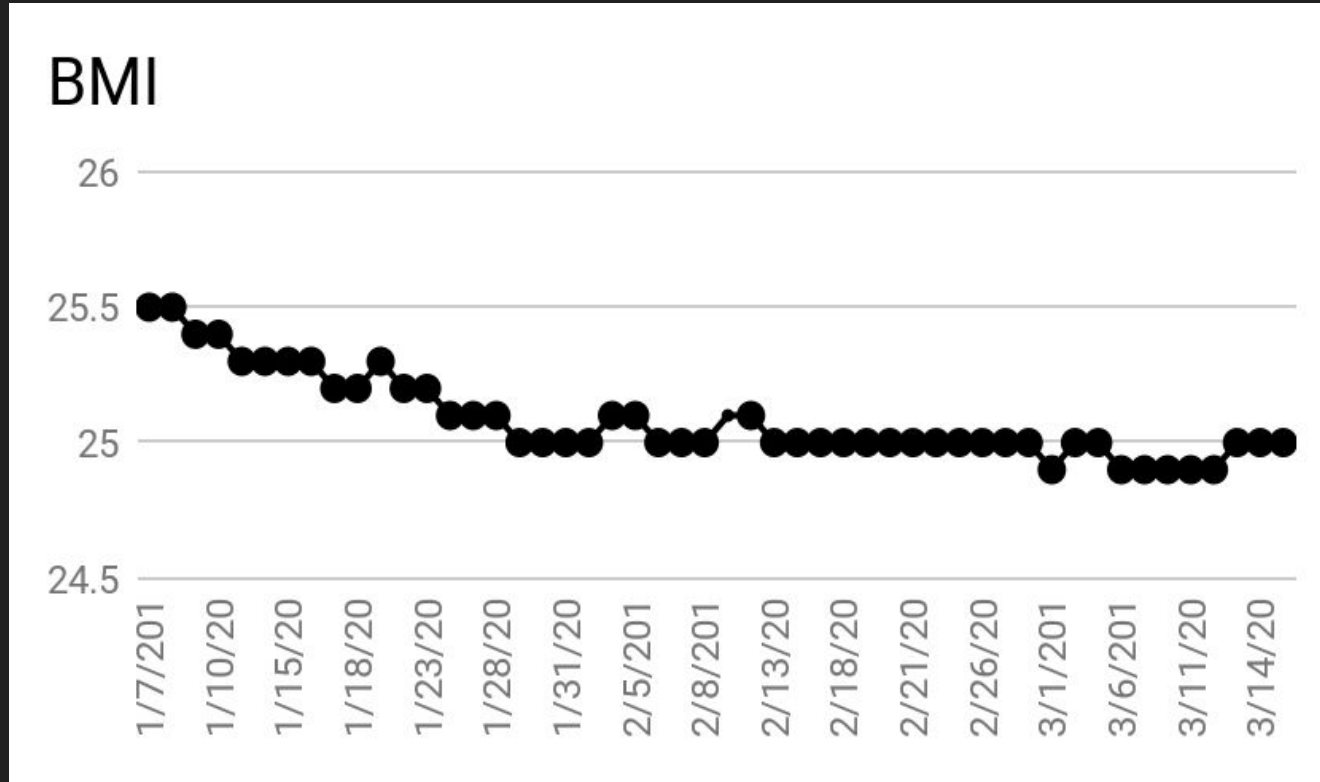
Chart exercises and weight gains/losses (BMI), document books read, journal, survey staff and family, document sleep habits, chart time regained in transition to new job, reflect on improvement/growth at the end of January and again at the end of the cycle in March, etc.

Timeline: January 7th - March 15th; Monday-Friday

Collect journals and reflections into a summative assessment of improvement/growth; document gains in strength, BMI, cardiovascular health, etc; document improvements in sleep habits; display survey results graphically

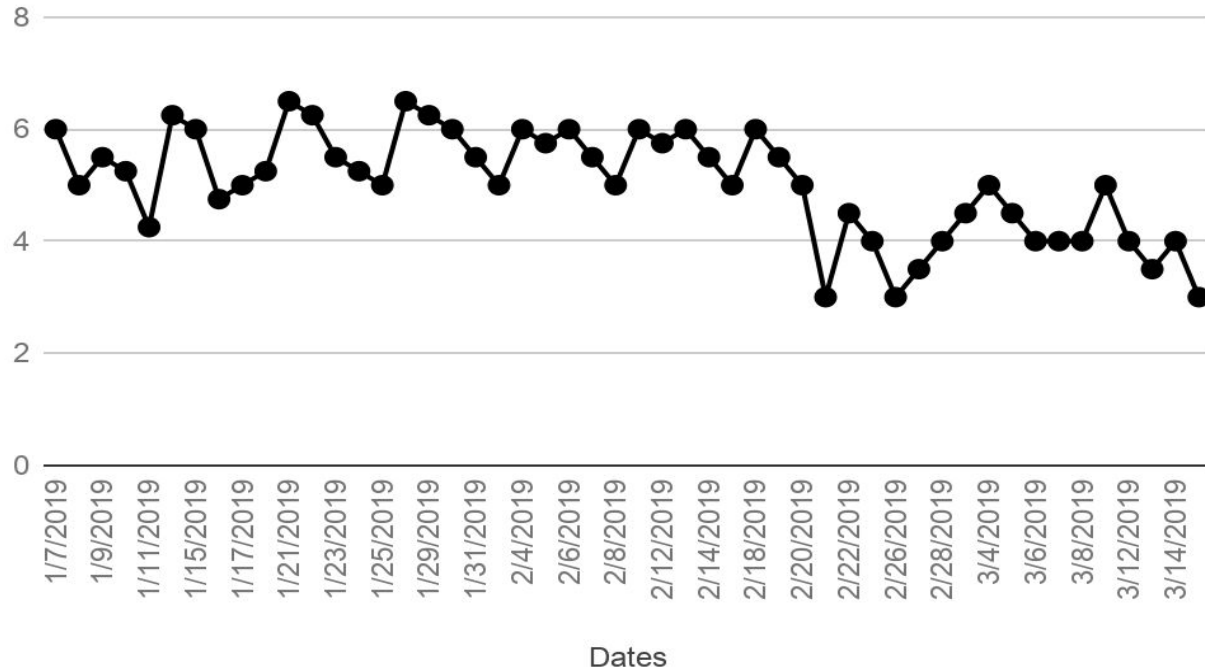


# My Data



# My Data

## Sleep





# My Data

- Sample Surveys; 4 rated questions; 3 short answers

- Pre-AR Response Form

Unless short-answer, all responses should be understood as 5 being the highest rating and 1, the lowest.

\* Required

Rate the pleasantness of my demeanor on a daily basis. \*

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the my attentiveness/alertness on a daily basis. \*

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the positive/negative nature of my demeanor on a daily basis. (5=very positive 1=quite negative) \*

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Post-AR Response Form

Unless short-answer, all responses should be understood as 5 being the highest rating and 1, the lowest.

\* Required

Rate the pleasantness of my demeanor on a daily basis. \*

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the my attentiveness/alertness on a daily basis. \*

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the positive/negative nature of my demeanor on a daily basis. (5=very positive 1=quite negative) \*

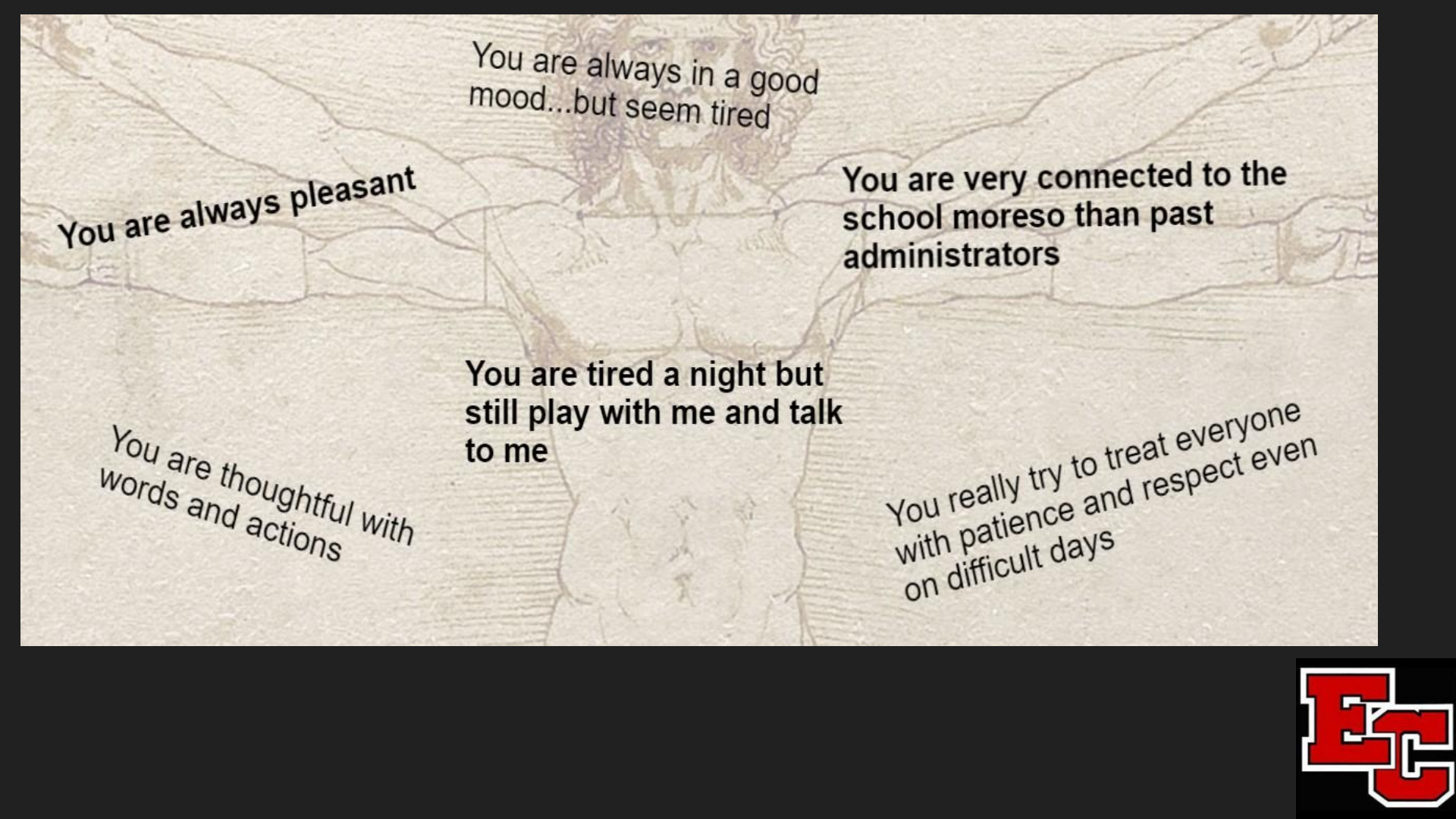
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



# My Data

- Summary of surveys
- Rated questions offered somewhat skewed results in that new colleagues and staff appeared to answer favorably rather than honestly as would be expected. These results would be inconclusive.
- Short answer questions offered some more enlightening responses especially in the post survey. Even my oldest son (4) was able to provide some interesting and thoughtful responses. **Many alluded to my engaged and pleasant, yet tired, demeanor.**





You are always in a good mood...but seem tired

You are always pleasant

You are very connected to the school moreso than past administrators

You are tired a night but still play with me and talk to me

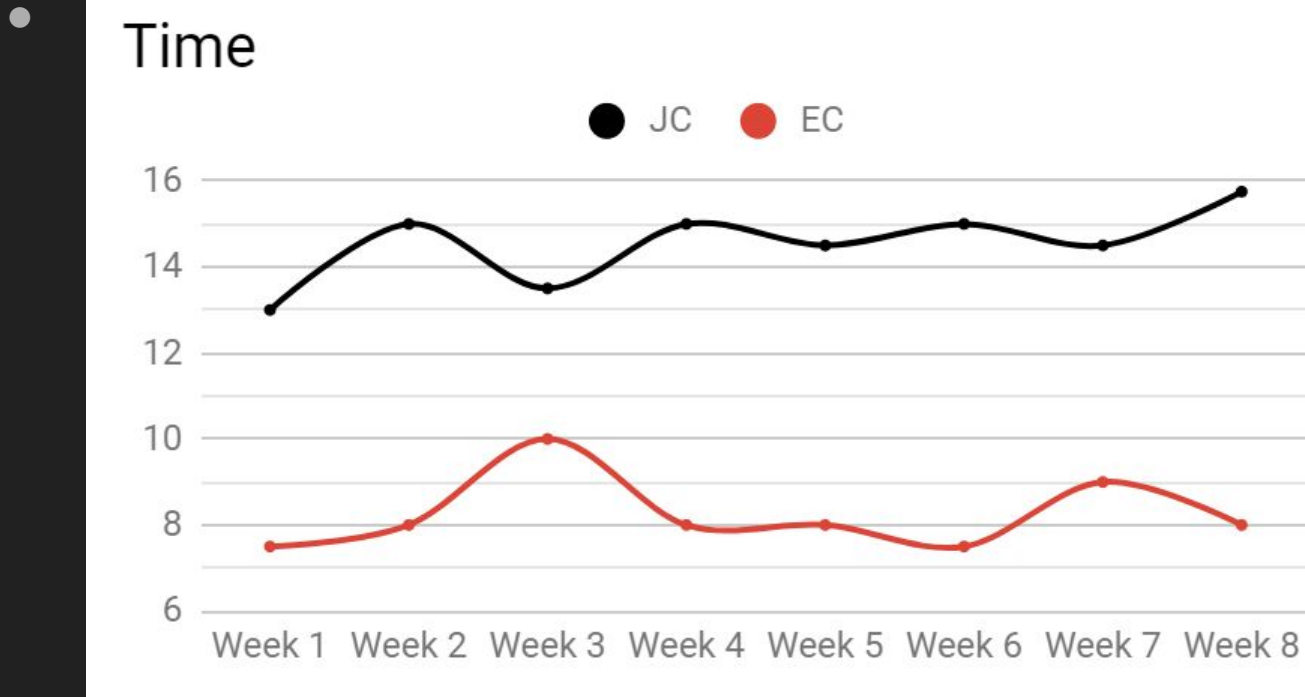
You are thoughtful with words and actions

You really try to treat everyone with patience and respect even on difficult days



# My Data

- Hours traveling; comparison of averages from 2017-18 to 2018-19



# My Discoveries

- Learning Statement One: Exercise was consistent and beneficial
- Learning Statement Two: Reading/reflection was less consistent and at times added to the stressors
- Learning Statement Three: However, through journaling and reflection and a late addition to data collection I was able to quantify a growing amount of family times. Although sporadic, it gave me the greatest peace and ultimately...balance. In driving time alone over a two month period, I have regained 50.25 hours or one work week. That averages out to approximately 7 hours per week. My wife and sons all comment on how much they appreciate seeing me more. Even my colleagues report positive interactions and focused engagement...*balance/flow*.



# My Discoveries

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# Where am I heading next?

- Relationships are key
- Balance = higher levels effectiveness
- Relationships take time, energy, and focus
- Balance/flow (Pink, 2011) is truly a journey rather than a destination

## Wonderings:

- 1) Can/will the time and energy spent focusing on relationships lead to successful implementation of the year 2 AR (Instructional Coaches)?
- 2) Will being more acutely aware of my journey help me balance life/work (find more consistent flow) and avoid the stereotypical burnout that plagues many of us in education/administration?



# Bibliography

- Gordon, Jon and Mike Smith. (2018) *You Win in the Locker Room First*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- McDowell, Michael. (2018) *The Lead Learner*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Pink, Daniel. (2011) *Drive*. New York: Riverbend Books.
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## Keeping My Tank Full

**Principal Name:** Tom Black

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### **Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)**

Since transitioning from the classroom and athletic realm into administration six years ago, I have consistently witnessed and personally felt the strains/stresses of work. The desire to do well in one's profession and perhaps even more important in the role of leadership in education, the desire to do well for others is very real and sometimes overwhelming considering the needs of so many. The struggle to find balance between work and life adds to the strain/stress. And yet, only in that balance/flow is where productivity and success truly exist...thus...the struggle.

### **The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)**

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to focus on time-management/balancing work and life (keeping my own tank full). Could this focus allow me to feel like, and ultimately be, a more productive and successful building leader and an instructional leader...will it help me maintain "flow" (Pink, 2011)?

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

My wondering focused on the challenges of task management in a large building with multiple needs/goals. Having worked in a large setting the past 5 years and knowing the difficulty in managing building/staff/curriculum/community while prioritizing teaching and learning, I was well aware of how many managerial tasks would inevitably take huge amounts of time and center-stage, and the focus on teaching and learning would fall behind in level of priority. My hope was that balancing work/life and/or personal/professional priorities would ultimately lead to fewer periods of burnout and longer periods of innovation/growth..."flow" (Pink, 2011) in the area of teaching and learning...could I be a better leader by keeping my own tank full?

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

- Carve out regular time to exercise 5 days per week (at least 30 minutes)
- Commit to consistent times for reading educational literature (at least 30 minutes per day)
- Respect family-time both in the evening and on the weekends
- Measure sleep habits throughout the AR process
- Chart difference in time from previous job to new job

### **Data Collection (Slide 6)**

Chart exercises and weight gains/losses (BMI), document books read, journal, survey staff and family, document sleep habits, chart time regained in transition to new job, reflect on improvement/growth at the end of January and again at the end of the cycle in March, etc.

Timeline: January 7th - March 15th; Monday-Friday

Collect journals and reflections into a summative assessment of improvement/growth; document gains in strength, BMI, cardiovascular health, etc; document improvements in sleep habits; display survey results graphically

### **My Data (Slides 7-12)**

Quantitative data: BMI, Weight gain/loss, Sleep chart, Travel time

Qualitative data: Survey summary, Journal summary

### **My Discoveries (Slide 13)**

- Learning Statement One: Exercise was consistent and beneficial
- Learning Statement Two: Reading/reflection was less consistent and at times added to the stressors
- Learning Statement Three: Family time, although sporadic, gave me the greatest peace and ultimately...balance

After collecting data and diligently working to maintain these routines focusing on self, I found that it is difficult, near impossible, to set school related things aside completely. I also discovered that consistent times for exercise were easier to establish than consistent times for reading/journaling. Exercise was mostly productive in the regular morning time slot. Time with a wife and two young sons was far too valuable in the evenings I could be home from work and therefore overrode consistent and productive time for educational literature and reflection.

### **Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 14)**

Again, regarding the specifics of the AR data collection points and journey itself, I was able to stay fairly consistent with exercise. However, it did not have the intended outcome of leading to more regular (lengthened) sleep cycles. I was unable to maintain regular reading cycles. Some reasons for this may have come from the “scheduled” nature of enjoyable activities. However, I was able to quantify a significant increase in time at home/with family. In some sense this moved me closer to achieving my goal of finding balance...keeping the tank full. Some reflective questions include:

- How can I create more natural times for reading enjoyable and educational literature?
- Did I, perhaps, read more than documented considering every newsletter/email/blog on a daily basis?

- Are there other ways to accomplish a more regular sleep cycle as it does not appear to be noticeably or negatively affecting my demeanor, engagement, or focus although it clearly is an unhealthy trend as I get older?
- Am I maximizing my time with family considering the time regained over the last 10 months?

In this transition to a new school, I have learned (reaffirmed) the importance of establishing/developing relationships. Without that balance, no school can truly grow. I have learned that although we display a certain level of dysfunction, we have a strong family-like environment. I have learned that my own perception of tiredness and perhaps even shortness may not necessarily be the perception of my colleagues, friends, and family. With this knowledge continuing to focus on positive relationships at work and home moves us all closer to effective balance. From *You Win in the Locker Room First*, John Gordon clearly states “By caring about them, you give everything you have to help your team become all they are meant to be” (Gordon, 2018). And, regarding balance, Daniel Pink’s *Drive*, perhaps my greatest influence regarding leadership in today’s world, sums up the need even necessity for balance and it’s direct correlation to success. “Flow explains why we seek happiness in externals and what’s wrong with it, where you can really find enjoyment in life, and how you can truly become happy by creating your own meaning of life” (Pink, 2011). Essentially, flow is a balance between joy and struggle...accomplishment and challenge. This journey, both professionally and personally, helped clarify my own journey to find balance/flow in my career and in my life.

Wonderings:

- 1) Can/will the time and energy spent focusing on relationships lead to successful implementation of the year 2 AR (Instructional Coaches)?
- 2) Will being more acutely aware of my journey help me balance life/work (find more consistent flow) and avoid the stereotypical burnout that plagues many of us in education/administration?

### **Bibliography (Slide 15)**

- Gordon, Jon and Mike Smith. (2018) *You Win in the Locker Room First*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
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### **Citing Your Presentation and Publication**

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