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### ***Exploring Alignment Between Thinker Motivation and Daily Job Satisfaction***

With a recent trend in education focusing on connections between mental health, job satisfaction, burn out, and retention for educators, I often wonder if principals take time to consider their own motivational needs as well. As principals part of our role involves taking on the burdens of others. However, I found myself taking on the burdens of others without finding time for those things that bring me purpose and renewed energy in my daily professional life. However, I also found myself thinking that tending to those needs was another thing to add to an ever-growing list of to-dos. Therefore, I wondered if I focused on those tasks and actions with brought me satisfaction in professional life and tried to weave them into my daily actions, if I might find myself increasingly motivated at work. In a way, looking at thinker motivation was a way to rediscover a part of my professional “why”.

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to use the information provided to us around motivational needs of a thinker (both my base and phase), to first examine how often I was engaging in tasks that resulted in motivation. Then, I wanted to examine if intentionally increasing those tasks daily resulted in higher job satisfaction. I was hopeful that this study might give me tangible strategies to ensure that I remain motivated and do not reach a burn out point. With this purpose, I wondered if intentionally tracking my motivational thinker needs will impact my perception of job satisfaction.

First, I examined the list of 13 motivators for Thinker Base. I narrowed this list down to those things that I felt were especially attractive to me: those activities that I felt were highly motivational and enjoyable. To me, these felt like “quick wins”, as I would be naturally attracted to doing these tasks. Then, I set up a scale of high, neutral and low job satisfaction. This seemed like an accurate way of capturing my general feel at the end of each work day. Finally, I committed to capturing the category of thinker motivational needs I met based on the activities I engaged in and my overall job satisfaction. I made sure that I did this each day before I left school, so that my job satisfaction was based on work and not personal or home activities and feelings. I captured my data in a spreadsheet. Each column represented one day. I would then place codes in the columns for the motivational activities I engaged in that day. Finally, at the end of each day, I rated my job satisfaction as high, neutral, or low. In addition, as I engaged in this data collection, I found it helpful to note specific events that happened that might have influenced job satisfaction beyond the motivational activities. For example, there was an occasion where a prominent family in our school community were the victims of random gun violence. By noting these types of rare occurrences, I would be able to tell if there were outlier days in my data. I tracked this data for 30 work days, which was approximately 6-8 weeks, considering snow days, days off school etc.

When analyzing the data, I began by calculating the total number of days which fell in each category of high, neutral or low job satisfaction. Then, I looked at the total count of each of the motivational factors per the 30 days of data. This gave me an idea of there were motivational factors I was meeting more often than others. Then, I looked at each of these categories individually to try to determine patterns and connections between certain motivational factors and overall job satisfaction. For example, were there more “solving problems” on days that I had high job satisfaction?

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Some of the patterns I noted were as follows: 5 out of 10 high job satisfaction days involved solving problems, 5 out of 10 high job satisfaction days involved seeing the impact of my work, and 5 out of 10 high job satisfaction days involved planning, organizing, and executing strategy. These activities were often also reported together on high job satisfaction days. I have concluded that my overall job satisfaction is highest when I am able to engage in activities that involve these Thinker motivational factors. Therefore, my job satisfaction is positively impacted by activities involving solving problems, seeing the impact of my work, and planning, organizing and executing strategy. In addition, 3 out of 5 low job satisfaction days were days when none of the motivational factors were reported as being done. The other two days I reported being engaged in seeing the impact of my work and mastering a new skill, but those types of activities were not engaged in for more than 40 minutes on those specific days. Therefore, I have concluded that the days where I am least satisfied with my job are those that have limited activities that meet my thinker motivational needs. Finally, as I was tracking my data, I started to notice the days when I was able to solve problems and then see the positive impact of those solutions that I was more satisfied. I found myself mentally noting that I was engaging in solving problems or noticing that I had a positive impact. These small changes positively impacted my mindset about my work. So, intentionally focusing on Seeing the Positive Impact of My Work and Solving Problems is a tangible strategy that can decrease the likelihood of having a low job satisfaction day.

In general, I found that there were several actions I can take in the future based on what I have learned from this project. If I operate on the assumption that regardless of which base or phase individuals may have or be in, there are motivational factors which do impact their perception of their job, then I can find time and space for my staff and for myself to engage in purposeful reflection about our motivational factors and how/when our job satisfaction is impacted by that work. I also think that I can be more cognizant, as a leader, of the motivational needs of those that I lead, so that I can impact overall job satisfaction and thus school climate. I plan to engage in journaling and reflection about my overall mindset and look for ways, each day, that I have solved problems and had a positive impact. I believe that if I can do this, I will increase my job satisfaction and, as a leader, perhaps impact the job satisfaction of those for whom I am responsible.

#### References

Davis, J. & Wilson, S. (2010). Principals' Efforts to Empower Teachers: Effects on Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction and Stress. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 73 (6), 349-353.

Regier, N. (2021). *Seeing People Through: Unleash your leadership potential with the process communication model*. Oakland: Berrett-Kohler Publishers.

# Exploring Alignment Between Thinker Motivation and Daily Job Satisfaction

PERRY HEIGHTS MIDDLE SCHOOL

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# Background Leading to this Inquiry

With a recent trend in education focusing on connections between mental health, job satisfaction, burn out, and retention for educators, I often wonder if principals take time to consider their own motivational needs as well. As principals part of our role is to take on the burdens of others. However, I found myself taking on the burdens of others without finding time for those things that bring me purpose and renewed energy in my daily professional life. In a way, looking at thinker motivation was a way to rediscover a part of my “Why”.



# Purpose of This Inquiry

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to use the information provided to us around motivational needs of a thinker, to first examine how often I was engaging in tasks that resulted in motivation and then to examine whether or not intentionally increasing those tasks resulted in higher job satisfaction. I was hopeful that this study might give me tangible strategies to ensure that I remain motivated and do not reach a burn out point.

## My Wondering

**With this purpose, I wondered if intentionally tracking my motivational thinker needs will impact my perception of job satisfaction.**

# My Actions

First, I examined the list of 13 motivators for Thinker Base. I narrowed this list down to those things that I felt were especially attractive to me: those things that I felt were highly motivational and enjoyable.

Then, I set up a scale of high, neutral and low job satisfaction. This seemed like an accurate way of capturing my general feel at the end of each work day.

Finally, I committed to capturing the activities I engaged in each day and my overall job satisfaction. I made sure that I did this each day before I left school, so that my job satisfaction was based on work and not personal/home.

# Data Collection

I captured my data in a spreadsheet. Each column represented one day. I would then place codes in the columns for the motivational activities I engaged in that day. Finally, at the end of each day, I rated my job satisfaction as high, neutral, or low.

In addition, as I engaged in this data collection, I found it helpful to note specific events that happened that might have influenced job satisfaction beyond the motivational activities.

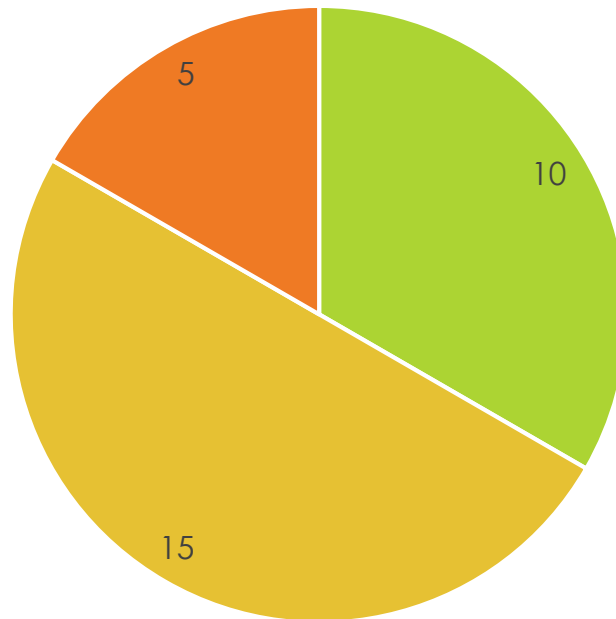
I tracked this data for 30 work days.



# My Data- Overall Counts

## Job Satisfaction Ratings

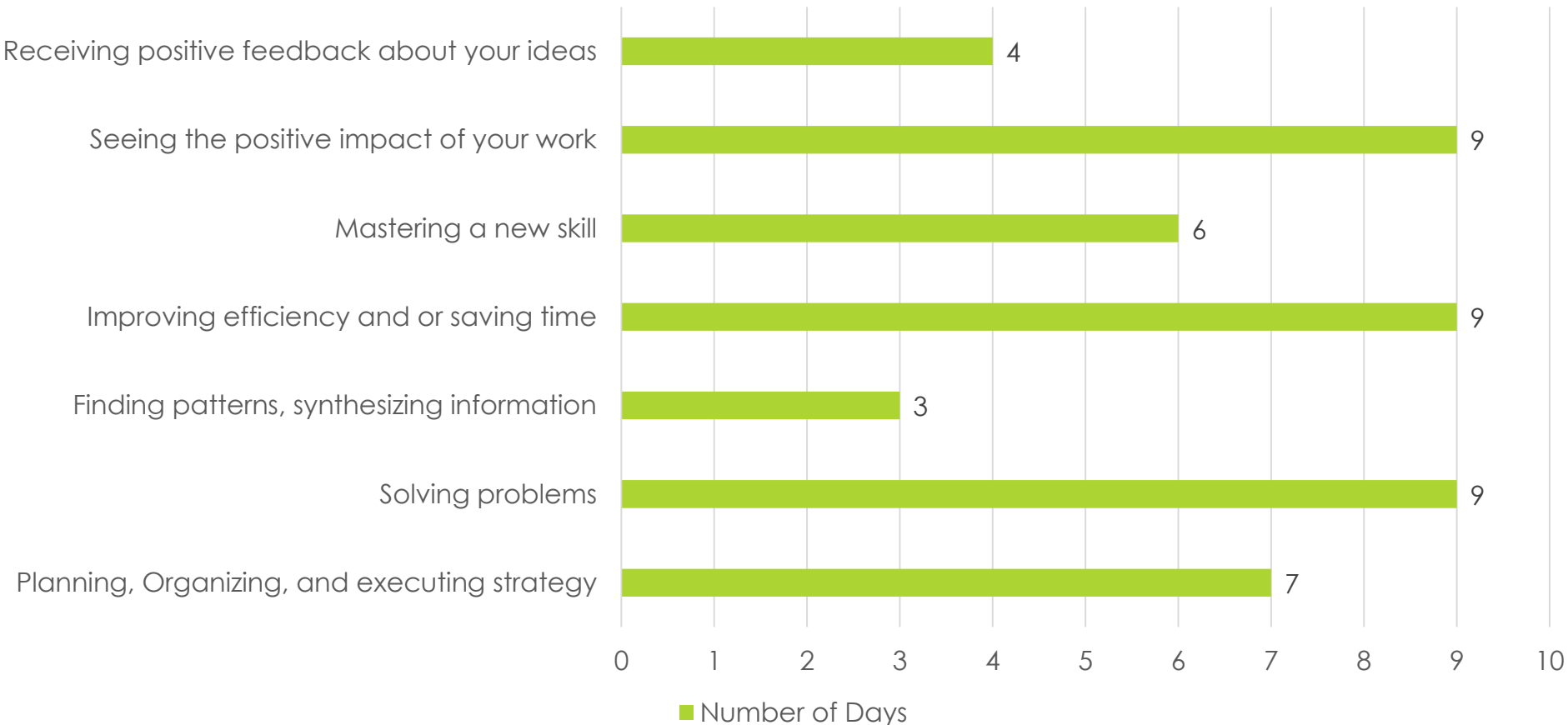
(Out of 30 Days Reported)



■ High ■ Neutral ■ Low

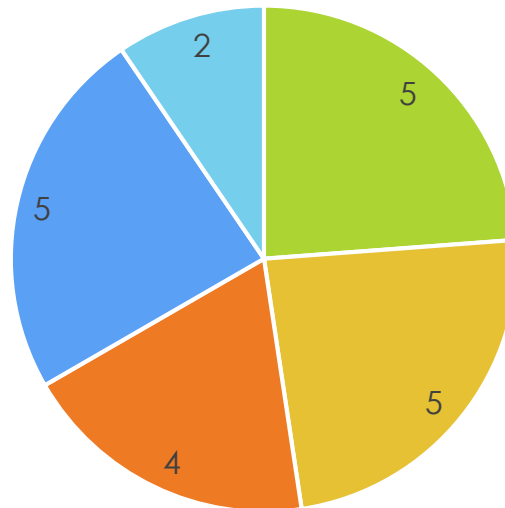
# My Data- Overall Counts

Count of Each Reported Motivational Factor Per 30 Days



# My Data Analysis

Motivational Factors Reported on High Job Satisfaction Days  
(Out of Ten Reported High Satisfaction Days)



■ Solving Problems

■ Improving Efficiency

■ Mastering A New Skill

■ Seeing Positive Impact of My Work

■ Planning Organizing and Executing Strategy

# My Data Analysis

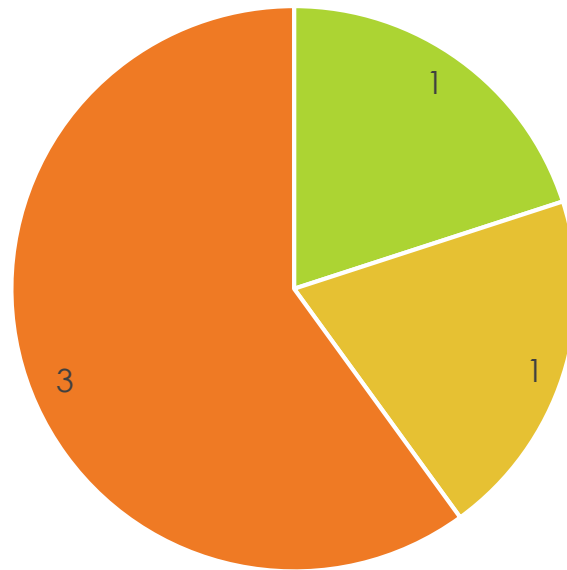
Motivational Factors Reported on Neutral Job Satisfaction Days (Out of 15 Reported Neutral Days)



- Planning, Organizing, and Executing Strategy
- Finding Patterns and Synthesizing Information
- Solving Problems
- Improving Efficiency
- Mastering a New Skill
- Seeing the Positive Impact of My Work
- Receiving Positive Feedback About My Ideas

# My Data Analysis

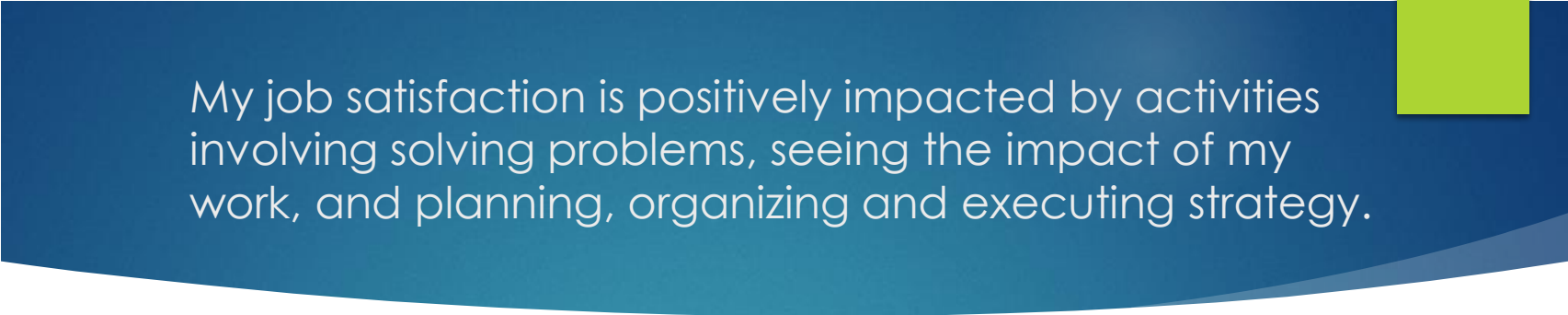
Motivational Factors on Low Job Satisfaction Days  
(Out of 5 Reported Low Job Satisfaction Days)



■ Seeing the Positive Impact of My Work   ■ Mastering a New Skill   ■ None Reported

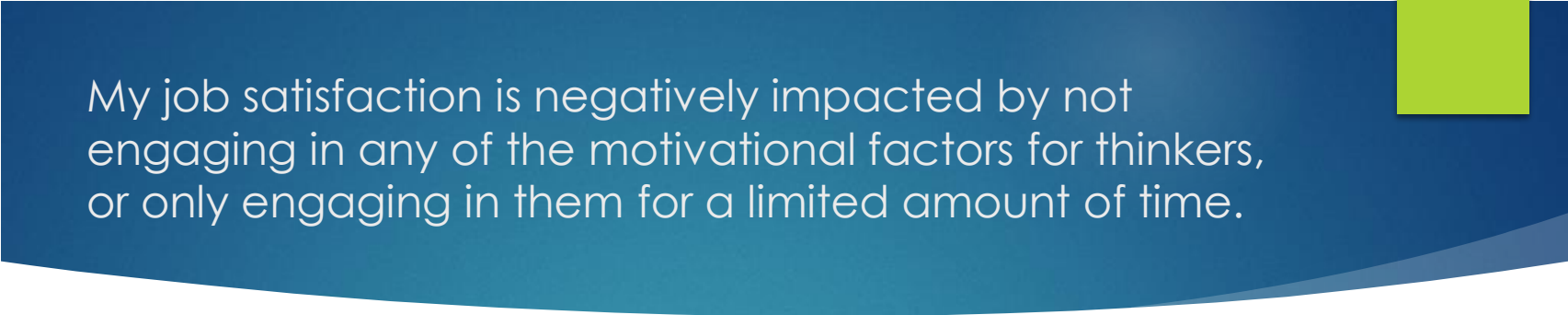
# My Discoveries

- ▶ Intentionally focusing on Seeing the Positive Impact of My Work and Solving Problems is a tangible strategy that can decrease the likelihood of having a low job satisfaction day.
- ▶ My job satisfaction is positively impacted by activities involving solving problems, seeing the impact of my work, and planning, organizing and executing strategy.
- ▶ My job satisfaction is negatively impacted by not engaging in any of the motivational factors for thinkers, or only engaging in them for a limited amount of time.



My job satisfaction is positively impacted by activities involving solving problems, seeing the impact of my work, and planning, organizing and executing strategy.

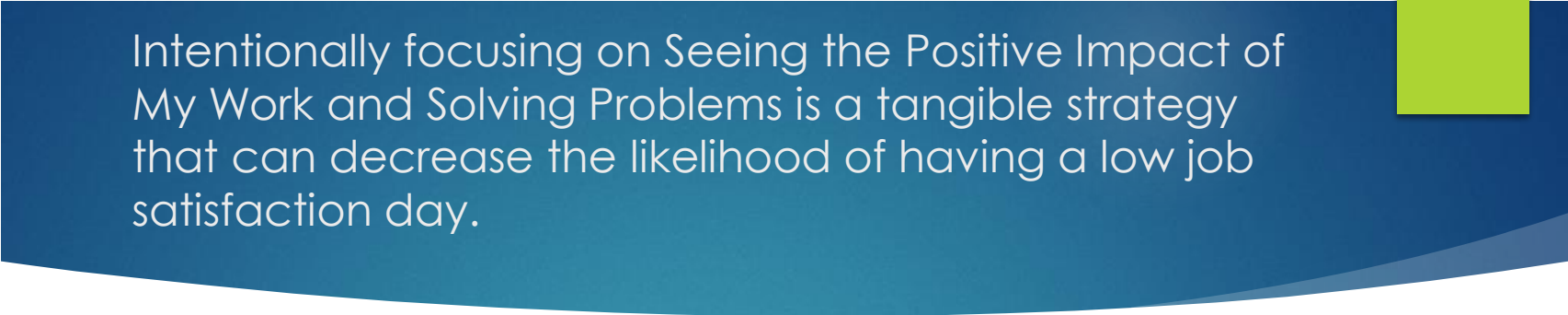
- ▶ 5 out of 10 high job satisfaction days involved solving problems
- ▶ 5 out of 10 high job satisfaction days involved seeing the impact of my work
- ▶ 5 out of 10 high job satisfaction days involved planning, organizing, and executing strategy
- ▶ These activities were often also reported together on high job satisfaction days
- ▶ I have concluded that my overall job satisfaction is highest when I am able to engage in activities that involve these Thinker motivational factors



My job satisfaction is negatively impacted by not engaging in any of the motivational factors for thinkers, or only engaging in them for a limited amount of time.

- ▶ 3 out of 5 low job satisfaction days were days when none of the motivational factors were reported as being done
- ▶ The other two days I reported being engaged in seeing the impact of my work and mastering a new skill, but those types of activities were not engaged in for more than 40 minutes on those specific days
- ▶ Therefore, I have concluded that the days where I am least satisfied with my job are those that have limited activities that meet my thinker motivational needs





Intentionally focusing on Seeing the Positive Impact of My Work and Solving Problems is a tangible strategy that can decrease the likelihood of having a low job satisfaction day.

- ▶ As I was tracking my data, I started to notice that days when I was able to solve a problems and then see the positive impact of those solutions that I was more satisfied
- ▶ I found myself mentally noting that I was engaging in solving problems or noticing that I had a positive impact. These small changes positively impacted my mindset about my work.

# Where Am I Heading Next

- ▶ Generally, if I operate on the assumption that regardless of which base or phase individuals may have or be in, there are motivational factors which do impact their perception of their job, then I can find time and space for my staff and for myself to engage in purposeful reflection about our motivational factors and how/when our job satisfaction is impacted by that work.
- ▶ I also think that, I can be more cognizant, as a leader, of the motivational needs of those that I lead, so that I can impact overall job satisfaction and thus school climate.
- ▶ I plan to engage in journaling and reflection about my overall mindset and look for ways, each day, that I have solved problems and had a positive impact. I believe that if I can do this, I will increase my job satisfaction.

# Bibliography

Davis, J. & Wilson, S. (2010). Principals' Efforts to Empower Teachers: Effects on Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction and Stress. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 73 (6), 349-353.

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