

Targeted Agendas: Creating Outcomes-Based Meeting Agendas

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

On any given day I am meeting with staff for any number of reasons. Whether it's with the staff as a whole, during PD time, to talk data, or with the Leadership Council, I had an agenda. But was this agenda simply a check list of items to "cover" for the sake of covering them?

I needed to ensure that these meetings meant something, and that there were valuable takeaways. So I began to think about my approach to planning meetings and what the agenda should look like. I took on the mindset of a teacher again planning lessons. I was thinking about the end goal prior to simply listing items on a page.

Therefore, the purpose of my action research is to create clear learning targets and outcomes for agendas every time I meet with all staff groups (staff, PD, Leadership Council, Graduation Council, etc.)

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if staff meeting agendas that include learning targets and outcomes will help me become a more effective leader by developing my capacity, ensuring staff outcomes align with student achievement?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I began by reflecting on my previous agendas. I examined the formats to identify places where I could enhance the content. Next, I also researched brief articles for creating effective meeting agendas. This served as inspiration on developing highly effective agendas that focus on outcomes. I needed to be specific in what I wanted, which meant I needed know the desired outcomes prior to planning the meeting. And I also wanted to ensure that these outcomes aligned with our mission/vision for student achievement. Of course, I also received lots of input from my IPLI cohort group--thank you to David Maugel for sharing his ideas! From here, I was ready to rough out a newly created format.

Again, I started to get back into "teacher mode" as I planned these things. Soon the meeting agendas started to take on the feel of a unit/lesson plan I used in my teaching days. Some of the new components of the agenda included essential questions. These served to focus our learning and were framed around the idea of bettering ourselves as teacher practitioners to spark critical thinking and collaboration. Next, I included learning target/outcomes, which were stated as "We can" and "We will" statements. I made sure to utilize strong, actionable verbs in these statements. I also thought these changes were appropriate since my school has been implementing a curriculum mapping agenda for the last year and a half making a push for teachers develop essential questions and to revamped their daily learning targets in class. This would be a nice way for me to model that expectation for staff.

Finally, every agenda included an Exit Ticket. Each ticket asked the following questions:

- Did we meet the stated outcomes in the agenda?
- Was there a powerful takeaway from this meeting?
- What was your takeaway?
- Did this meeting connect with our mission/vision?

The data collection was kept fairly simple and collected over a three month period of time. The first data piece was a staff pre-survey, which included seven questions. The aforementioned exit ticket was administered after every meeting as my formative assessment. During my data collection period I conducted three monthly staff meetings, two monthly PD sessions, one graduation committee meeting, three jr high team meetings, and two school leadership council meetings. The staff was then given the post-survey, which was the same as the pre-survey administered earlier. In collecting all this data, I wanted to assess whether or not the staff was finding value in the meetings, and what were they taking away.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, the two most important things I learned are that staff wanted meetings to focus on specific information that connected directly to our mission/vision, and they also need this information to be followed up upon by administration.

In the pre-survey two of the questions that had the lowest response rating were "Meetings with staff are focused on specific information."

"Meetings with staff support our school's mission and vision."

Based on a rating scale of 1 being never to 5 being always, each of these questions had an average response rate of 4.4. While this may seem fairly high, it was still two of the three lowest rated questions; therefore, I thought I needed to act upon this. I meet with several groups on a regular basis, and I always want to ensure that our outcomes work to highlight our purpose and support the mission and vision. This data informed me that I should be very intentional with establishing learning targets and outcomes for every meeting.

The pre-survey question with the lowest response rating was

"Topics of staff meetings are followed up upon by administration."

Based on the same scale as the two questions above, this question had an average response rate of 4.07. To me, this was a pretty insightful piece of data, even if it may have been hard to swallow. I took this one pretty hard. No one wants to sit through a meeting and simply have information thrown at them only to feel like it was a one off. If we are all working for the betterment of our students and school, there needs to be continuity in what we do. I had to do something to address this issue, as well as the other two above.

In an attempt to further monitor my progress and the effectiveness of meetings with staff, I needed to revamp the way I thought about, planned, and ultimately delivered the meeting content. Of course, the first step was to revamp my meeting agendas. Along with the reworked format, I also needed to collect data to assess the meeting effectiveness, and this is where the Exit Ticket came into play. This would be my formative assessment.

The Exit Tickets were three simple yes/no questions and one short answer. I simply tracked the number of responses after each meeting and then calculated the overall percentage of yes/no for each questions. I

monitored the one open-ended question--What was your takeaway?--after each meeting. The general trend was that people were citing nuggets that were aligned to the learning targets on that particular agenda. There were a few times where I received input that I really would never have perceived getting, but that was fine. Even these bits of information proved that staff were being reflective in their participation during the meeting. If the "odd" piece of feedback was in line with that person thinking about his or her teaching or interacting with students, or working toward an outcome based on student needs, I would consider that a win. In the end, the data for the three other questions turned out as follows:

Did we accomplish our stated outcomes? 95.7% YES

Was there a powerful takeaway? 91.3% YES

Did this meeting connect with other aspects of our mission/vision? 98.9% YES

I was very pleased with these responses. I still feel there is some fine tuning to do with the powerful takeaway. I just need to ensure that I continue to develop ways to deliver the message.

Finally, after administering the post-survey, I went back to my three central questions of inquiry. I was pleased to see a bump in scores in each of those areas. The results looked like this:

"Meetings with staff are focused on specific information."--average rating jumped from 4.4 to 4.7

"Meetings with staff support our school's mission and vision."--average rating jumped from 4.4 to 4.67

"Topics of staff meetings are followed up upon by administration."--average rating jumped from 4.07 to 4.4

I was very pleased that I was able to move the needle in the right direction. It is satisfying to know that my extra efforts in planning meeting time with staff are growing more effective. While still not perfect, I feel this experience was one that was worthwhile, and the lesson from this has given me much to reflect upon as I move my career forward.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

In thinking about this action research cycle, I would say that I will continue with creating meeting agendas in this way. I strongly feel this has enhanced my leadership because as much as anything, this keeps me honest. I find that I have developed a process wherein I am asking myself key questions as I plan. Questions such as:

Do I need to take time from a staff meeting to talk about this? Does this align with student achievement mission/vision? Have we talked about this before and if yes, how can this next discussion move this idea forward?

Being more intentional, for me, reminds me of what the bigger picture is for staff and our school.

As far as the process goes, I would like to add in a couple other pieces in the future. One, I'd like to build in some norms of collaboration with the staff. I think if we fold this in, each staff member will have some input on what the expectations are when we meet, building some autonomy and collegiality. Also, this is another accountability piece to help us hold each other accountable to the process, keeping it focused on the task at hand.

I would also like to build in our school motto: We Are BOBCATS: Bringing Our Best Character, Attitude, Teamwork, and Scholarship. As we cover topics during meetings, I envision us reflecting on how those topics support one or more of those pillars. I feel making this part of the Exit Ticket would help in this area in a couple ways. One, if we ask ourselves if today's topic related to character, attitude, teamwork, or scholarship, we are taking this opportunity to again recalibrate what those terms mean to us. I feel this would be healthy to do on a regular basis because the motto then has a life. And we enter into discourse regarding different aspects of those ideals, thus our understanding, needs, and outlooks will continue to grow. Next, it reinforces that the outcomes of any discussion we may have about school related matters should support these tenets.

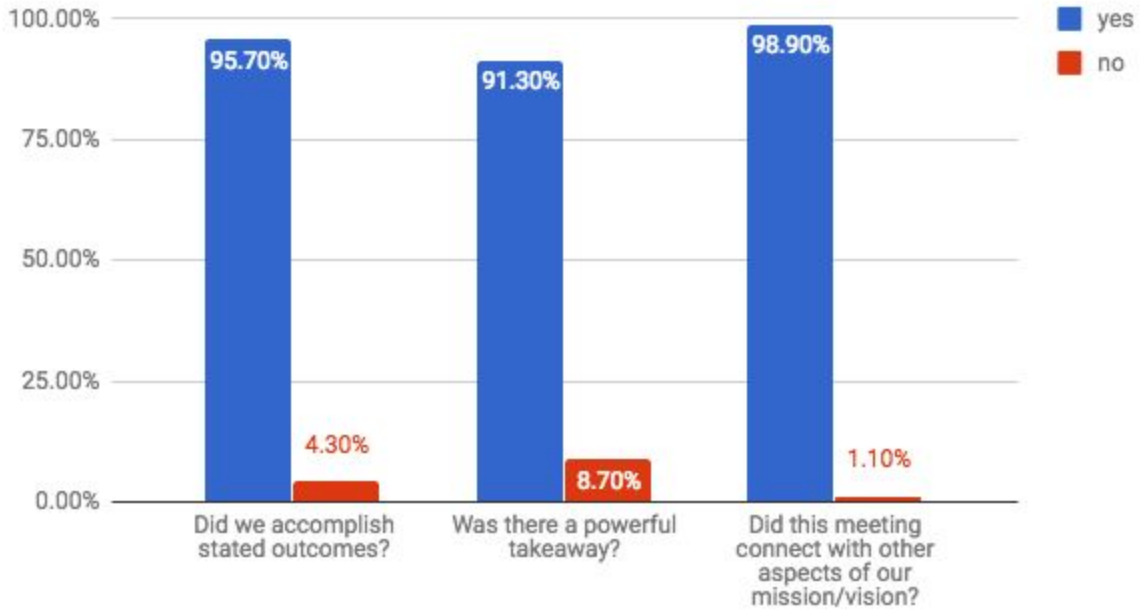
Overall, this action research project has been very beneficial to me. It has made me think about my personal goals and development as a leader. I think the natural by product of that is a trickle down to student achievement. This is done via better organized, more focused, and outcomes driven meetings. And I am confident teachers value productive meetings as time is too precious a commodity to waste.

References:

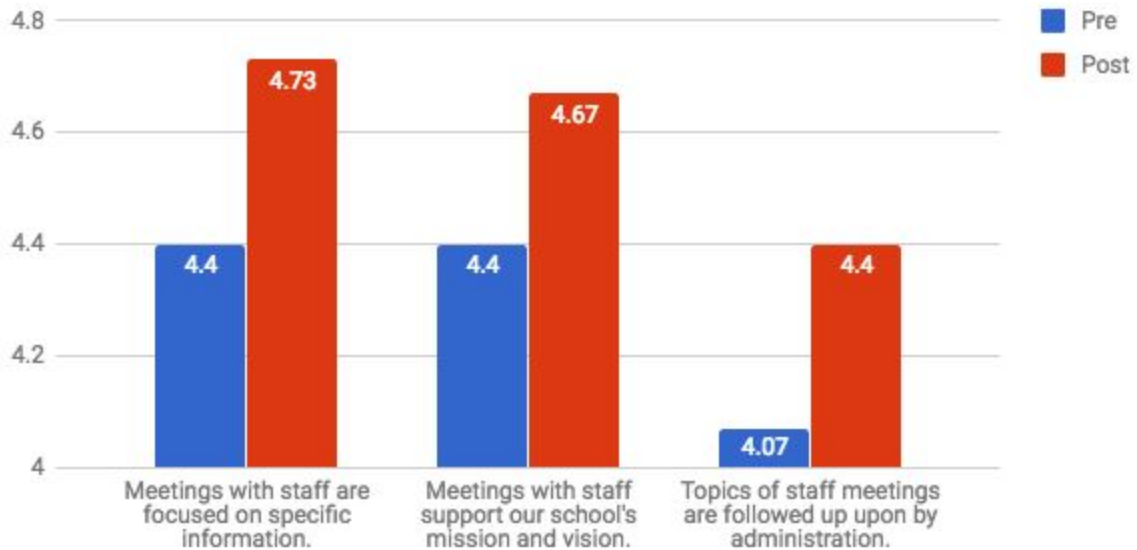
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Pletcher--Cohort 5 AR Showcase Charts

Exit Ticket Running Totals



Pre and Post Survey Comparison



Pre-Survey--Lowest Rated Responses