

The Impact of Innovation and Presence on Building a Culture of Collaboration

By: Sean Galiher, Schmucker Middle School

Contact: srgaliher@phm.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

My journey towards the determination of an inquiry question began when I analyzed my school leadership survey. I wanted to determine where I could improve my leadership abilities and used the survey data to pinpoint an area of focus. The data led me to standard number 2 which focused on whether or not the building principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. This standard reflected the lowest mean and highest standard deviation and suggests my staff have different opinions on my leadership in this area.

Therefore, the purpose of my inquiry is to determine how my visibility and presence impacts a culture of trust, learning and high expectations for students and staff. I want to learn about how my staff responds to myself as principal when I am present and able to answer questions in many different settings.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if building in additional time for regular collaboration and a commitment to being present during these conversations across the building would contribute to a higher level of professional dialogue within my staff. In addition, would these steps help nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, I decided to facilitate a building wide meeting schedule that allowed grade level teams and mixed grade level teams to collaborate more frequently on a variety of different topics. I utilized a 30 minute part of our school day to find extra time for teachers to gather and discuss curriculum and assessment in addition to ways to incorporate innovative practices into daily instruction that maximize student engagement and learning. Teachers were organized into groups that we identified as Innovation Hour teams and PLC teams. A schedule was shared at the beginning of the year that indicated when these meetings would occur and suggested agenda items. In addition, my plan was to attend every Innovation Hour meeting and also as many PLC meetings as possible throughout the year.

In order to collect data so I could analyze the impact of this plan, I sent out a survey to my staff near the end of the school year that mirrored the original question that my inquiry was based upon. I wanted to know if my teachers felt any different about whether or not the work we did during the year helped nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations.

I collected survey data in March and was very pleased with the results. I was curious to see if the mean would increase and the standard deviation would decrease as a result of our focus. When I analyzed the data, I was excited to report that the mean increased from 3.39 to 4.0 and the standard deviation decreased from 1.51 to .68. This data helped validate that our plan to increase opportunities for all staff to collaborate had a positive

impact on the staffs opinion about our approach to nurturing a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, I learned two very important things. I learned that being present and being more accessible as a principal is extremely important. I also learned that it is important to systematically plan opportunities for staff to collaborate within a structured collaborative environment. When I surveyed my staff again, the mean increased from 3.39 to 4.0 and the standard deviation decreased from 1.51. to .68 when. This data helped validate that our plan to increase opportunities for all staff to collaborate had a positive impact on the staffs opinion about our approach to nurturing a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations.

Google Presentation with Data -

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1FoeTQ4vuEFfejWhanDxRTpC424CuIDS6hm6Hv1sJW0E/edit#slide=id.g1f0b2f4733_0_15

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

The action research cycle has become a practice that I have found to be very useful with making improvements within a school. I used to think that I needed to find the best program or proven practice to implement before making necessary change. However, waiting to find best practices has proven to be difficult and does not allow time to implement change when needed. The action research cycle provides a opportunity for administrators to experiment and learn along the way. What I appreciate most about this cycle is the parallel that can be drawn to what I would expect from teachers in the classroom. Teachers should be looking for new and innovative ways to provide quality instruction to students and sometimes they just need to try something new without waiting for the strategy to be considered best practice and published. When teachers implement strategies and reflect on this process with their colleagues and students, the school benefits. I learned that my teachers crave collaborative time and they appreciate opportunities to collaborate beyond their content area. I also learned that I need to continue to embrace this research process with future planning that I do with teachers and staff as this process will accelerate change within a school.

Looking ahead, the action research process will become a regular part of the expected practices for myself and my school. This research cycle helped jump-start another idea for my school that we will investigate the next school year. Our new wondering will encompass the idea of creating a teaming schedule for our sixth grade students and teachers and the impact this schedule could have on achievement and student behavior during this transitional year. We will use the 2017-2018 school year to build on this wondering and find ways for our sixth grade teachers to collaborate in different ways.

Schools and the education field in general will continue to evolve and change in the years to come. This rate of change will be accelerated due to the advances in technology and teaching pedagogy. The action research process gives educators a way to be innovative, but also practical in the processes used to improve schools. Administrators need to be responsive to the needs of their students and teachers and using this research protocol will make change and improvement occur at a greater rate for those administrators who believe in this approach. I am excited to continue to practice the action research process with my staff and school in the future and plan to share with other administrators my learning along the way.

References:

N/A

The Impact of Presence on Building a Culture of Collaboration

Schmucker Middle School



Sean Galihier
IPLI Cohort #4

Background Information



Standard #2: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

| | Self-Rating | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------------|----|------|--------------------|
| Nurtures and sustains a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations | 4 | 41 | 3.39 | 1.51 |

3.39 - lowest survey average

1.51 - highest standard deviation

Why? 

Wondering

Would building in additional time for regular collaboration and a commitment to being present during these conversations across the building contribute to a higher level of professional dialogue within my staff? In addition, would these steps help nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations?

Process

Innovation Hour Meetings (New)

8 groups (mixed content areas)

Share ideas (assessment, instruction, movement, creation, joy)

Department Plan Time (New)

Used open advisory teachers to
cover for teacher to collaborate

Attended PLC and department
Meetings (presence)



Innovation Hour



WHAT DO
YOU DO
WITH AN
IDEA?



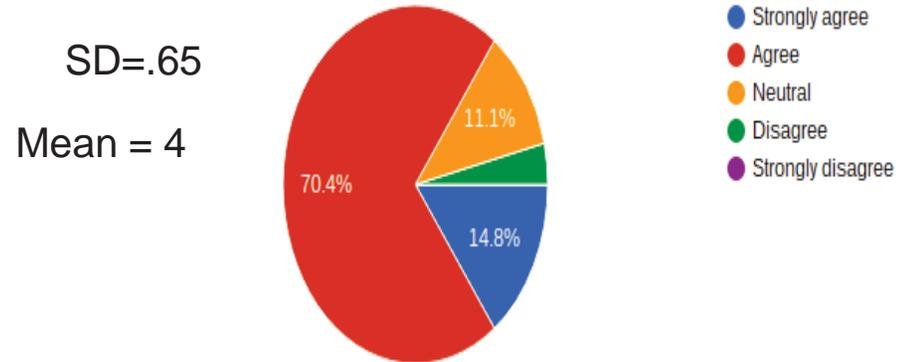
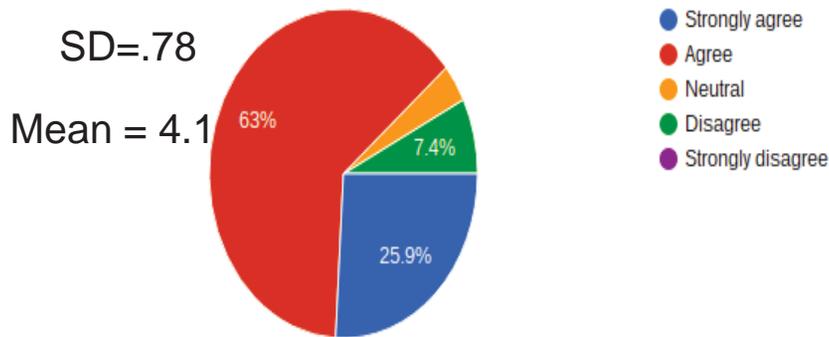
Written by Kobi Yamada | Illustrated by Mae Besom

Additional Collaboration

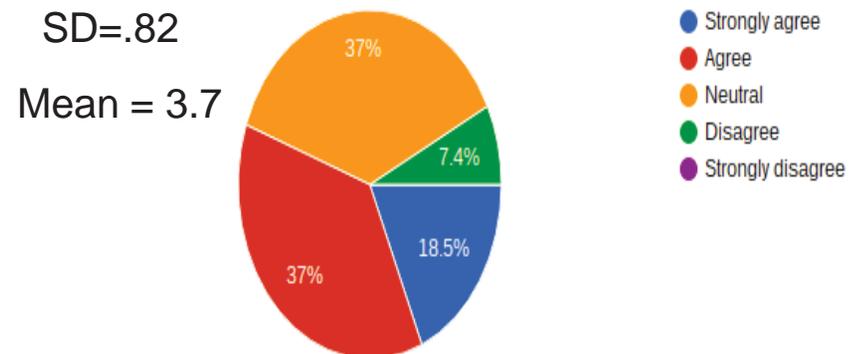
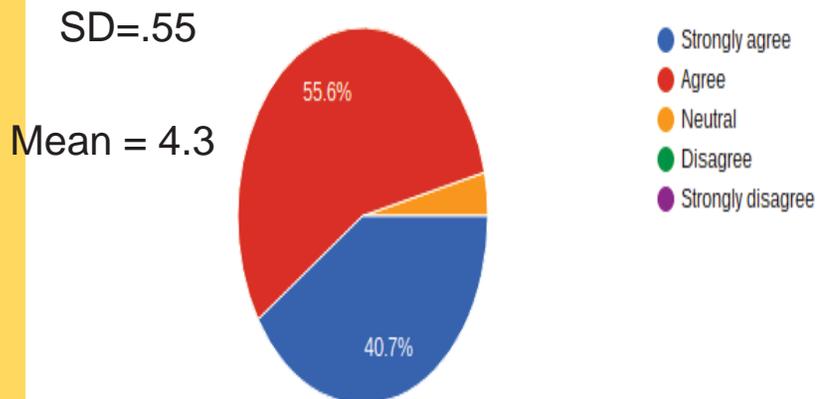
Department Plan time

Altered advisory schedule to allow departments the opportunity to meet together for 1 hour each month to review data and plan. This plan did not take away from existing planning time. Advisory classes were covered by other staff.

The building principal nurtures and sustains a culture of collaboration. (27 responses)
The building principal nurtures and sustains a culture of trust. (27 responses)

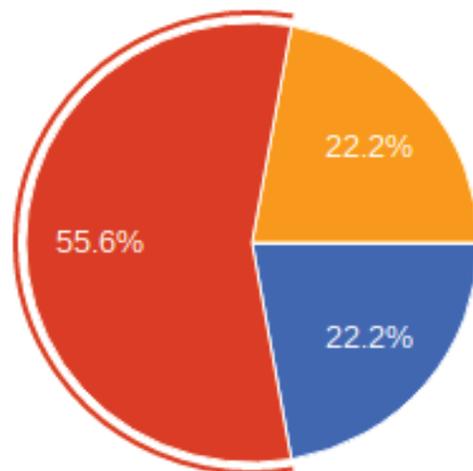


The building principal nurtures and sustains a culture of learning. (27 responses)
The building principal nurtures and sustains a culture of high expectations. (27 responses)



Overall, the building principal nurtures and sustains a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations.

(27 responses)



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Spring 2016

SD=1.51

Mean=3.39

Spring 2017

SD=.68

Mean=4

| Spring 2016 | Self-Rating | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------------|----|------|--------------------|
| Nurtures and sustains a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations | 4 | 41 | 3.39 | 1.51 |

Learned with Data

An increase in the mean from 3.39 to 4 and a decrease in standard deviation from 1.51 to .68 suggest that the majority of teachers and staff feel a positive difference in my approach as an educational leader nurturing and sustaining a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations.

Next Steps

1. Continue with morning Innovation hour meetings but expand to two meetings during the year.
2. Continue with morning department meetings and ensuring I attend one per month.
3. Work to build a teaming schedule at the 6th grade level to help with transition to middle school using advisory teacher coverage to provide time to collaborate for each team of teachers.