The Walking Meeting

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

After putting together the first 9 weeks professional development and meeting schedule, I realized that my staff and I would be sitting for approx. 380 minutes out of 495 scheduled minutes. That is over 6 hours of sitting together in meeting settings and possible loss of interest or engagement.

I came up with "The Walking Meeting" as a way to still hold meetings that are valuable and to bring team members along with me so that we could "walk and talk" our way to accomplishing goals, quick review of data points, and idea-storming without having to sitting at a table. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to engage my staff in working together to solve problems outside of the normal setting of a meeting to increase creativity.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered how can changing the way I conduct quick meetings improve productivity and enhance our moods?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I let staff know in advance, when we would have "Walking Meetings" by denoting which meetings would be a walking meeting, for example: March 17th: Teacher Leaders 3:00-3:30 PM (WM - Door 3). The staff knew to come prepared to discuss the topic of the meeting as it is very difficult to walk and hold items.

While walking, we were actively listening and engaging in conversation. We could also break into smaller groups to have purposeful conversation about specific students and topics. Then we could reconvene back together to share out. Staff is invited to bring their phone for note-taking and reference. We also had a safety plan in place in case of a lock-down drill. (Safety Vests)

I started collecting data in July 2016 by recording our steps, collecting notations on Google Keep and keeping track of participants. We put that data into a table to demonstrate how many miles we walked individually and collectively while having on of these meetings.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data I learned four things, first, everyone was on board, as long as they could physically do it. Secondly, all staff could speak about their data without needing to follow a presentation or look at paperwork - they talked like the data was seamlessly part of the conversation. Thirdly, we were able to participate in the care of our outdoor areas, as we walked we also picked up trash and debris. Lastly, the greatest reflection of all was that some of our "Craziest Ideas" were discussed during our walking meetings.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

As I reflect on this process, I think about how fun the very first meeting was when all staff members participated. We bonded and recorded the day with notations, video and photos. Because the initial Walking Meeting was so well received, it was not difficult to get teacher leaders to buy into the process of having meetings in a non-traditional way.

I am also surprised about what we learned about ourselves, each other and our campus. During this process, we paid more attention to what our campus looked like, by not passing trash, taking pictures of issues that needed to be addressed, and not needing PowerPoint or pages of data to talk about our students and needs. Everyone came ready and prepared to engage and problem-solve.

As an administrator, we have to think out-side of the box when it comes to traditional practices. How can we ask our teachers to be more innovative and to personalize if we aren't willing to do the same. This process demonstrated to my staff that I do pay attention to how much of their time I ask for to lead school improvement. It also showed them that I am expecting more from myself in regards to innovation and personalization.

References:

Smothers, R. C. (2016, November 17). How to Do Walking Meetings Right. Retrieved April 24, 2017, from https://hbr.org/2015/08/how-to-do-walking-meetings-right