

# Boundaries & Balance



**Blue Academy Elementary**  
**Mr. Adam C. Allen**  
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## Background Leading to this Inquiry: Context

**May 2021: Board Approved Principal,  
Blue Academy.**

**July 14, 2021: Archie Mansfield Allen**

**August: Start School COVID-19**



# Background Leading to this Inquiry: Context

**MSD of Decatur Township: Blue Academy Elementary School**

**708 Students**

**K-6: 40+ Teachers**

**80% Free & Reduced, School-Wide Title I**

**20 Languages**



**#BeTheDifference**

## **Background Leading to this Inquiry: The Issue**

**After 2020-2021 school year. (COVID)**

- No Mental Clarity
- Weight Gain
- Struggling to juggle family & school life.
- Not the best version of myself as a husband, father or principal.

## Background Leading to this Inquiry: The Purpose

Therefore the purpose of my inquiry was.....

*to build more boundaries and find a better school life balance. I want to be more intentional about taking care of my mind and body for mental clarity in juggling the many hats I wear as principal of Blue Academy.*



**My Wondering: With this purpose we wondered...**

*...how my physical fitness affects my stress level and mental clarity to perform and be the best version of myself at home and at Blue Academy.*

CULTIVATING PLAY AND REST

"If we want to live a Wholehearted life, we have to become intentional about cultivating rest and play, and we must work to let go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth."

— Brene Brown

# My Actions: Intervention & Procedures

1. Assess family calendar & communicate with my wife.
2. Begin fitness routine: 4-5 times per week.
3. Schedule 1 hour of Red, White & Blue time at school each day.
4. Track daily stress level and mental clarity each day.



# Data Collection & Analysis

Daily I will record stress level 0-5. 0= Happy 5= Stressed out

Daily I will record mental clarity level 0= Clear 5= Total Brain Fog

Daily I will record tasks completed each day.

Daily I will record if I completed a workout or not.

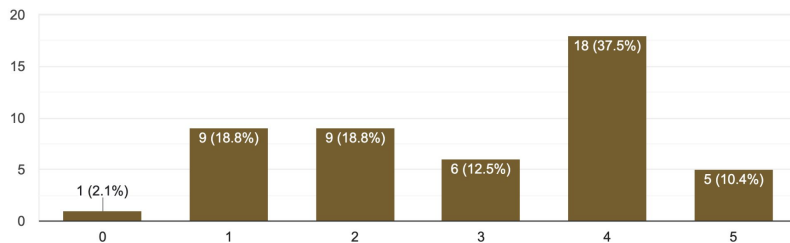
Adam C. Allen Action Research Form



# My Data: Stress Level & Mental Clarity

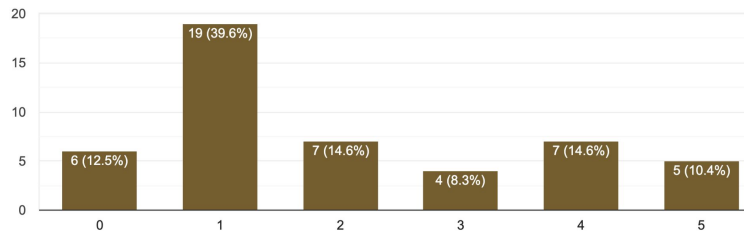
Stress Level

48 responses



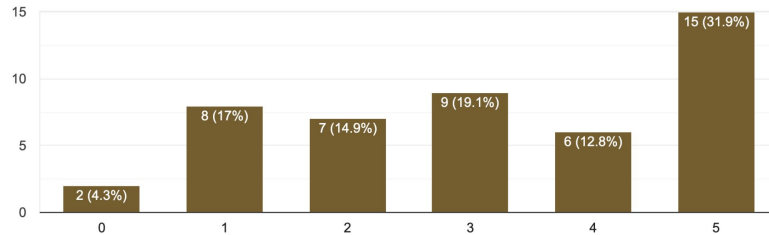
Mental Clarity

48 responses

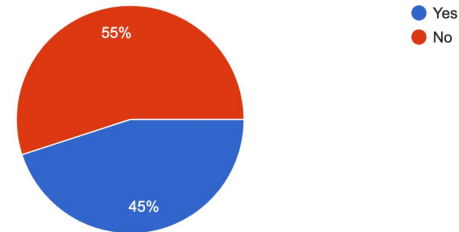


# My Data: Tasks Completed & Red, White, Blue Mindfulness

Tasks Completed  
47 responses

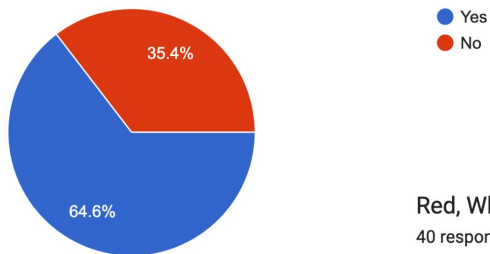


Red, White, Blue Mindfulness  
40 responses

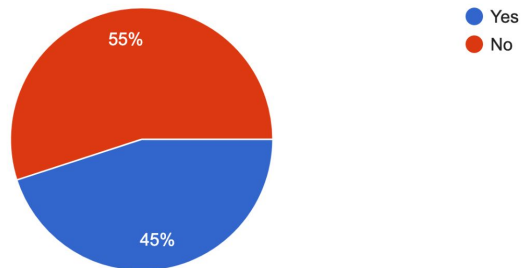


# My Data: Workout & Red, White, Blue Mindfulness

Workout  
48 responses

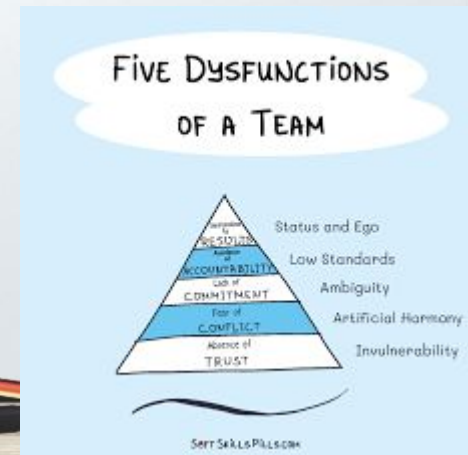


Red, White, Blue Mindfulness  
40 responses



# Qualitative Data & Impact

1. Transparent about work life balance w/ staff. (August 2022)
2. Schedule send emails.
3. Schedule common planning time and data input time for staff during PD & PLC.
  - a. Belief, Behavior & Outcome Activity w/ grade level teams.
4. Staff Shout-Outs
5. Personal & Professional Best
6. Delegation & Trust: The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team



# My Discoveries

Learning Statement One: “Red, White & Blue”/Fitness time is crucial to my mental clarity and focus.

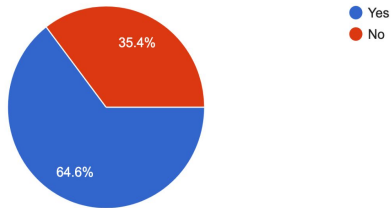
Learning Statement Two: Transparency with my staff has created trust and a culture of balance at Blue Academy.



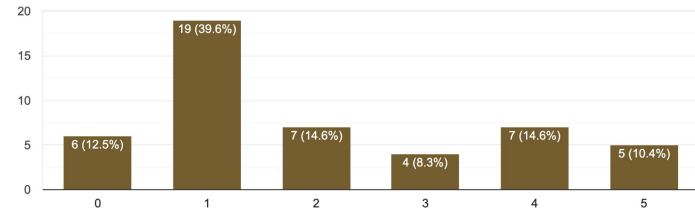
# My Discoveries: Learning Statement One

**Learning Statement One: “Red, White & Blue” time is crucial to my mental clarity and focus.**

Workout  
48 responses



Mental Clarity  
48 responses

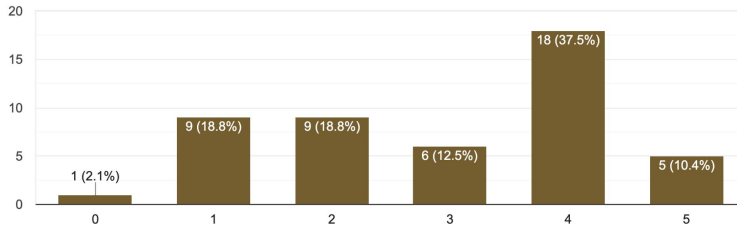


- 1. Intentional time at school and at home leads to the best version of me.*

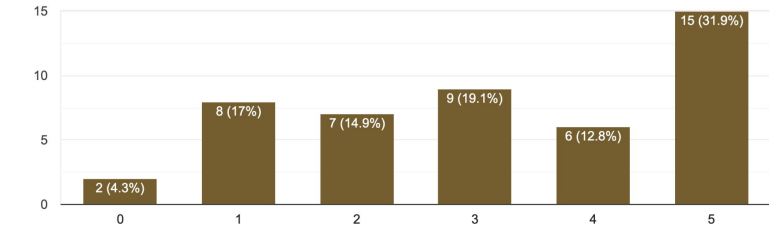
# My Discoveries: Learning Statement Two

**Learning Statement Two: Transparency with my team has created trust and a culture of balance and support at Blue Academy.**

Stress Level  
48 responses



Tasks Completed  
47 responses

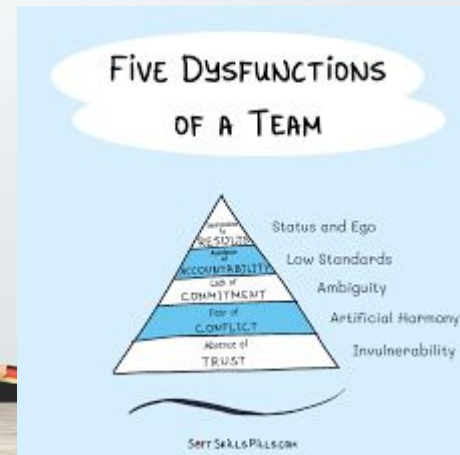


1. *It's hard work, but it is good work AND we do it TOGETHER!*
2. *Intentional balance and support with leadership team and teachers enables the success of our students.*

# Where Am I Heading?

## What have I learned?

- **Intentionality is everything**
- **Honest transparency creates trust with your team.**
- **My teachers want to know I trust them and believe in them.**
- **Vision & Culture are everything**
  - **Be the Difference**
  - **We Cause Learning**
  - **“I trust you.” this is EVERYTHING**



# Where Am I Heading?

What are the implications for the principalship?

- Leadership before pedagogy.
- Be someone others want to follow.
- If you are not good, your school will not be good.
- Be intentional about balance with your teachers. Communicate this.
- Provide the vision, delegate, coach & trust your team.



# Bibliography

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: brave work, tough conversations, whole hearts*. New York, Random House.

Lencioni, P. (2012). *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Jossey-Bass.





**Principal Name:** Adam C. Allen

**School Name:** Blue Academy Elementary

**Principal's Email Contact:** [acallen@decaturproud.org](mailto:acallen@decaturproud.org)

### **Background Leading to My Inquiry: Slide 1**

In May 2020 I was approved to be the new Principal at Blue Academy Elementary school. During this process as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic we had to navigate how we would serve 700+ students in a remote learning environment, hybrid learning environment and also in person. This was during my first year of being a principal. Also, in July of that same year before school started my wife and I welcomed Archie our son.

As a result of COVID-19 and being a new principal my work life balance became almost more than I could handle. I was not healthy mentally or physically. I was not fully present at home and extremely stressed; causing a lack of mental clarity professionally.

### **The Purpose of My Inquiry: Slide 5**

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to build more boundaries and find a better school life balance. I wanted to be more intentional about taking care of my mind and body for mental clarity in juggling the many hats I wear as principal of Blue Academy.

### **My Wondering: Slide 6**

With this purpose, I wondered how my physical fitness affects my stress level and mental clarity to perform and be the best version of myself at home and at Blue Academy.

### **My Actions: Slide 7**

My actions included the following. Assessing my family calendar and communicating with my wife the struggle I was feeling managing personal and professional responsibilities. We together developed a plan that included.

1. Fitness routine 4-5 times per week.
2. Schedule an hour of "Red, White & Blue" time at school each day.
3. Track my daily stress level and mental clarity each day.

### **Data Collection: Slide 8**

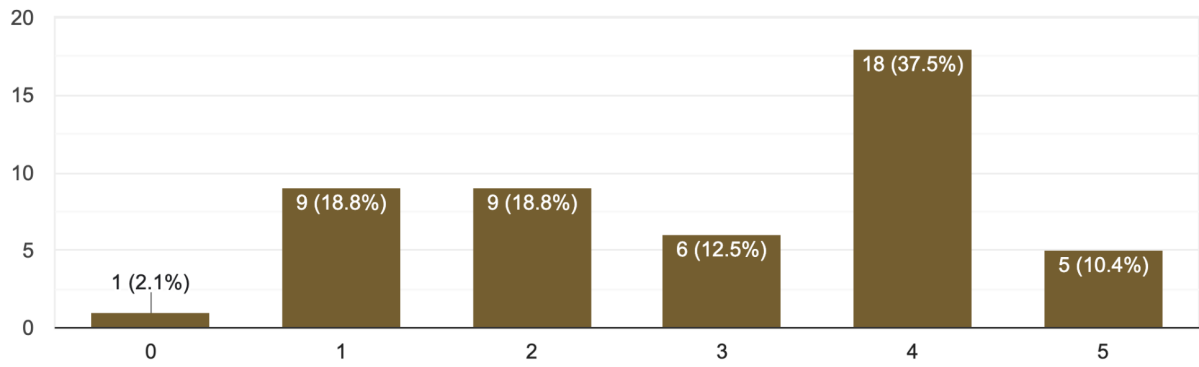
I tracked via Google Forms the following information.

1. Daily stress level 0-5. 0= Happy 5= Stressed out
2. Daily mental clarity level 0= Clear 5= Total Brain Fog
3. Daily record tasks completed each day.
4. Daily record if I completed a workout or not.

## My Quantitative Data: Slides 9-11

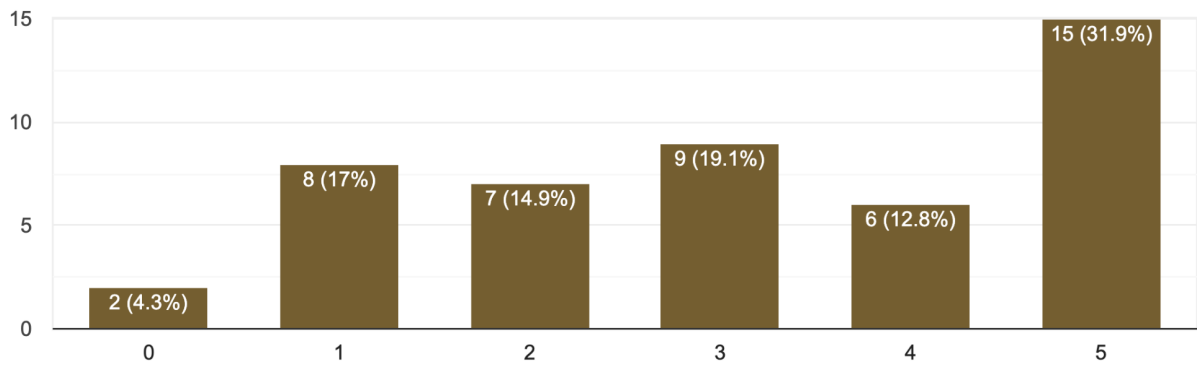
### Stress Level

48 responses



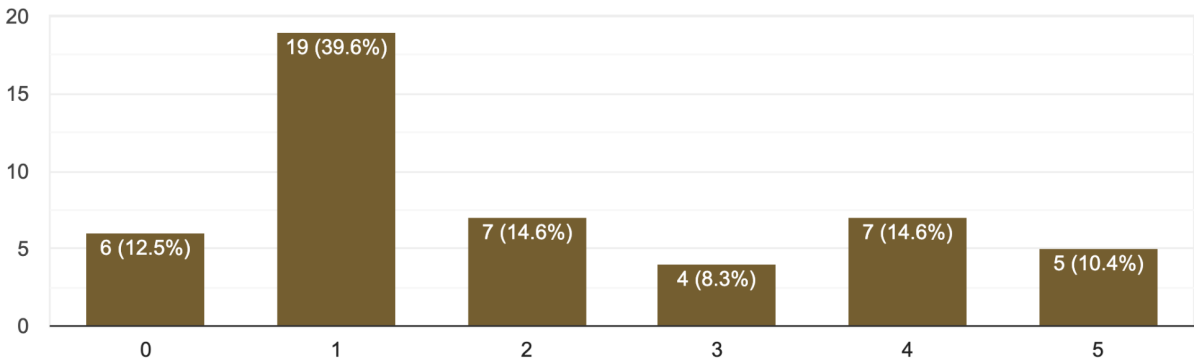
### Tasks Completed

47 responses



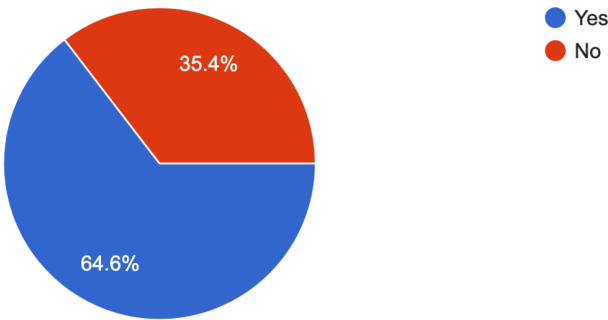
Mental Clarity

48 responses



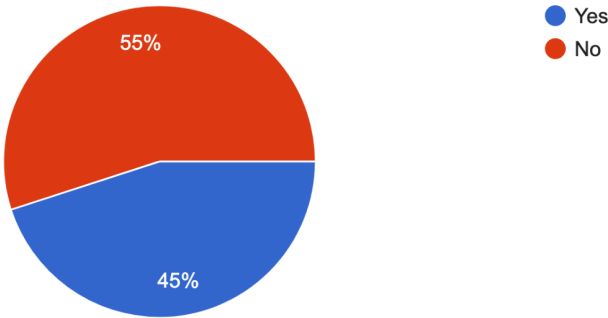
Workout

48 responses



Red, White, Blue Mindfulness

40 responses



### **My Qualitative Data: Slide 12**

1. Transparent about work life balance w/ staff. (August 2022)
2. Schedule send emails.
3. Schedule common planning time and data input time for staff during PD & PLC.
  - a. Belief, Behavior & Outcome Activity w/ grade level teams.
4. Staff Shout-Outs
5. Personal & Professional Best
6. Delegation & Trust: The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team

### **My Discoveries: Slide 13**

In this step, summarize your learning in two to three brief statements that illustrate the most critical facets of what you learned:

**1. Learning Statement One: “Red, White & Blue”/Fitness time is crucial to my mental clarity and focus.**

- a. I have learned that having time to mentally decompress, process and organize has led my overall stress level to decrease and mental clarity to increase. In order for this to happen I have to plan and be intentional with my hectic personal and professional schedule.

**2. Learning Statement Two: Transparency with my staff has created trust and a culture of balance at Blue Academy.**

- a. At the beginning of the school year I spoke with my staff about the importance of finding balance and bringing the joy back to learning. We were very intentional about giving teachers time during professional development or professional learning communities to also help them find more balance in their personal and professional lives. Some strategies include....
  - i. Sharing of personal and professional bests.
  - ii. Scheduling time during professional development and professional learning communities
  - iii. Providing time for common planning during professional development.
  - iv. Intentional focus on collaboration among grade levels through professional learning communities to decrease teacher workload.
  - v. Delegation of responsibilities and tasks among our Blue Academy Leadership Team to build capacity in all members.

### **Where I Am Heading Next: Slide 17**

The implications of what I learned are really simple. As educators it is easy for us to always serve and focus on our kids or our teachers. In reality, I have come to the conclusion that if I am not in a good place then our school cannot be in a good place. Finding this balance has led me to understand that building trust among my team and delegating is absolutely essential for our school to grow.

### **Bibliography Slide 18**

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: brave work, tough conversations, whole hearts*. New York, Random House.

Lencioni, P. (2012). *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Jossey-Bass.