

Balance is Best

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

As a leader, I regularly remind my staff to plan intentionally, have a healthy balance between work and home, and to always put family first. Unfortunately, I realized that I was not modeling this or leading by example. I was arriving to school between 5:00-6:00 a.m. most mornings and leaving on average at 6:30 p.m. each evening. This was having a negative effect on my family and, in turn, my morale. As a leader, I decided to practice what I always preach in regards to being balanced and intentional and track the subsequent impact. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to increase my leadership efficiency and improve the critical balance between my professional and personal lives.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered in what ways might being more intentional with planning my professional day/week impact the important balance with my personal life?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, I tracked my departure times during semester one to obtain baseline data. During semester two, I created and implemented a weekly planning form which included scheduled appointments, staff shout-outs, important observations to complete, notes, and a reminder of our school's deliberate professional development practices. Additionally, the planning form included to-do tasks with regular daily/weekly tasks pre-populated for consistency and convenience.

I used a Google Sheet to track my departure time each day during semester two. At the bottom of this sheet, I utilized a formula to average my daily departure time. This tracking provided the means to make a comparative analysis to my baseline data. When evening events were scheduled on the school calendar, I intentionally did not track departure times on these dates as to not skew my data. In addition to this quantitative means of data collection, I was also able to collect qualitative data in the form of personal notes from my staff and family. Following this yearlong process, I compiled and analyzed all applicable quantitative and qualitative data.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned include:

Intentional planning increases efficiency and productivity. Monitoring and tracking daily departure times increases the mindfulness of balance, which results in more family time and a healthier personal/professional balance.

Intentional planning increases efficiency and productivity. By utilizing a common planning form, I was able to be more intentional with my time on a daily basis. All of the important tasks as a building and instructional leader were in one location for quick reference. As a result, less time was spent each day being pulled in

various directions and priority tasks were completed. As a leader, I was operating from a proactive lens and could put first things first.

Monitoring and tracking daily departure times increases mindfulness, which results in more family time and a healthier personal/professional balance. During semester one, my average departure time was 6:37 p.m. During semester two, my average departure time was 5:42 p.m.

In addition to the data intentionally measured as a part of my action research, other positive outcomes were also informally noted. These include, but are limited to, later arrivals to school each morning and completing less school-related tasks at home in the evenings and on weekends.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

As building administrators and servant leaders, we are regularly pulled in multiple directions, which often results in neglecting our own professional growth needs. It is vital to continuously re-evaluate and improve in our craft. As good as we are...we can always get better. This action research cycle reinforced this mindset. I have re-emphasized the importance of leading by example, planning proactively, and putting first things first. In doing so, I have been able increase my leadership efficiency and productivity as well as increase the valuable time serving in my most important roles of being a husband and father.

As Principal Keith Howell stated in a recent blog post, "Talented educators are intentional in their planning." This action research has certainly affirmed this sentiment. As a result, I will continue to be intentional with my planning and re-prioritize each day. This is certainly a win-win personally and professionally.

References:

Howell, K. (2018). Intentional Planning - Relationships & Strategies. Retrieved from <http://principalhowell.blogspot.com/2018/04/intentional-planning-relationships.html>