



Being the Best Me-Personally and Professionally!

Principal Name: Beth Henry

School Name: Southwest Elementary School

Principal's Email Contact: bhenry@gws.k12.in.us

Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)

As principal of a K-5 elementary school with 550 students, 60 staff member (certified and non-certified), and no assistant, I am in charge of managing all administrative responsibilities. It is easy to feel like I am spinning a hundred different plates at one time at work. Some days I feel like I've worked really hard, but my to do list actually gets longer instead of shorter. Because there are so many things to do, certain essential tasks like checking email, paperwork (data, discipline log entries, signing documents, paperwork) end up coming home with me. I am known to be reading and answering emails or even phone calls until late at night and again early in the morning while I am getting ready for work. I work on paperwork while sitting in the living room, and I get on my computer and work on data or other documents while at home as well. Responsibilities at home being a homeowner, wife, mother of two busy teenage daughters, and pet owner are difficult to keep up with. This is especially true since we live 38 minutes away from where we work and attend school. I tend to lack sleep because my mind is always swimming with things going on at school or at home. Organization is important to me, so when I don't feel like I'm meeting the needs of my family because I'm working at home, and I don't feel like I'm meeting the needs of my school because of too much happening at home, it causes stress and burnout.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)

The purpose of my action inquiry was to find a better balance between work and home in order to avoid burn out and stress in my job, to be more mindful of the needs of my family when I'm at home, and ultimately, be an all-around better version of me.

My Wondering (Slide 4)

With this purpose, I wondered if committing to personal and professional boundaries would help me stay more balanced and productive at work and at home? This initial wondering led to additional questions: Will being more intentional about my time help lower levels of stress and feelings of burnout? Will finding a solid balance between work and life have a positive impact on my health? Will finding a personal and professional balance help me be a better administrator? Will I be able to sustain balance over time-especially if positive results occur?

My Actions (Slides 5-8)

STEP 1: Set Boundaries

The first step I took was developing some guidelines or boundaries for myself at work and at home. I wanted to try to organize my time at school and my time at home as much as possible. I implemented the following personal and professional boundaries, which would be tracked over an eight week period of time:

1. Implement professional work boundaries:

- Leave school by 5:30 PM
- No checking or sending emails after 5:30 PM
- No phone calls or texts related to school after 5:30 PM (unless emergency)
- Intentional daily calendar scheduling-time for emailing, time for being out of the office (in classrooms, at meetings, case conferences), time for meeting with teachers to take care of needs, time for lunch, top priorities for the day
- No responding/checking email on the go-only during scheduled times as much as possible
- No taking paperwork/computer work home (unless absolutely necessary)
- No working on Saturdays or Sundays (unless absolutely necessary)

2. Implement personal/home boundaries:

- No checking or sending work emails after 5:30 PM
- No school-related phone calls or texting after 5:30 PM (unless emergency)
- Schedule family events, important reminders, and important things to do within my calendar and daily schedule to stay on top of what's going on and up and coming
- No paperwork or computer work once home (unless absolutely necessary)
- No working on Saturdays or Sundays (unless absolutely necessary)

STEP 2: Notify colleagues and my family

I wanted to be sure my staff knew what I was doing. They were used to texting, emailing, or calling me any time they needed. I wanted to be sure they knew that I was setting work limits at home so that I wasn't giving off the perception of not responding.

STEP 3: Start Daily Journaling and answering survey questions

I needed to find a way to track the success of the day. I created a Google Form to help me track sleep, water intake, productivity, and whether or not school related responsibilities had to be completed at home.

STEP 4: Survey my family three times throughout the course of the research

I surveyed my family at the start of the project, in the middle of the project, and at the end of the project. I wanted to find out if they could tell a difference in whether or not I was more attentive to things at home when I was at home.

Data Collection (Slide 9)

Data was collected over an eight week period of time from November 11, 2019 through January 30, 2020. Data included:

1. Journaling daily
2. Calendar tracking—did I adhere to my personal and professional boundaries?
3. Calendar tracking—did I accomplish my top priorities?
4. Calendar tracking—did I accomplish personal care each day (water, exercise, food intake)
5. Informal surveys with family

My Data (10-17)

Journaling Data:

11/12/2019-Today was a rough day. I had a lot of things on my OPEN calendar to take care of today. Unfortunately, most of that didn't happen. I spent the morning in a meeting that lasted an hour longer than anticipated. I wanted to do a walk about in the school, but that didn't happen. I was supposed to have lunch with a student and that didn't happen. I also was supposed to have a student come down for a sensory break at the end of the day and that didn't happen. We had a domestic issue where two parents showed up to pick their child up from school and neither wanted the child to go with the other. I had to call GPD to come help me sort out the paperwork and what to do. They ended up letting the kid decide and convincing the mom to compromise with the dad and let him go with his dad. It was a sad situation and not easy to deal with. That took up my entire afternoon and ate into the PLC time which was team planning. Hard day.

12/06/2019-- What a tough day. I spent more time today on adult issues than anything. There is trouble in the QUEST room and trouble with the custodians. I wish people would do a better job focusing on the kids. We launched staff BINGO this week and so far several are participating. I'm excited for the first prizes to go out! I had a great lunch with second graders and got all of my phone calls home. I was also able to make it to K.B.'s classroom for her Genius Hour. Overall things went well with accomplishing my top priorities, but it got stressful today. I don't like it when staff members cry and can't get along. I'm making some staffing changes for Monday to see if that helps. I think one of the staff members having a problem won't be with us long-she is job searching. Nonetheless, that brought professional stress last week and it is going to carry over to the 9th as well. The staff holiday party is this weekend, so that should be interesting. I'm thinking I might need to make some adjustments in my AR Project. I can't live up to the boundaries I've set. I will need to look at how to modify those a little to give myself a little more grace. The AR project isn't supposed to stress me out, but I'm not doing well accomplishing what I need to and it feels stressful when tracking that. Time to rethink.

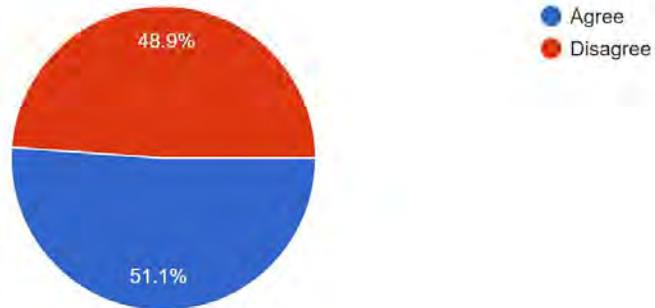
1/13/2020-Today was a good day. I was able to get my top priorities accomplished. I am also leaving after dismissal to watch Avery cheer at a bball game with Maura. Tonight is NOT a night I am taking work home. Feels good. And, get this, I slept 4.5 hours straight last night!! WOW! I think drinking more water is helping!

1/27/2020-Pretty decent day. Had two case conferences and a pos. beh. lunch today! Only one behavior issue. I was able to accomplish my top priorities. That feels good! Tonight is a night I will be working later. That being said, I didn't work last night and I won't need to work the night after. I feel much better about how I am prioritizing my time. Believe it or not, but I'm sleeping better, too!

Adhering to Personal and Professional Boundaries Data:

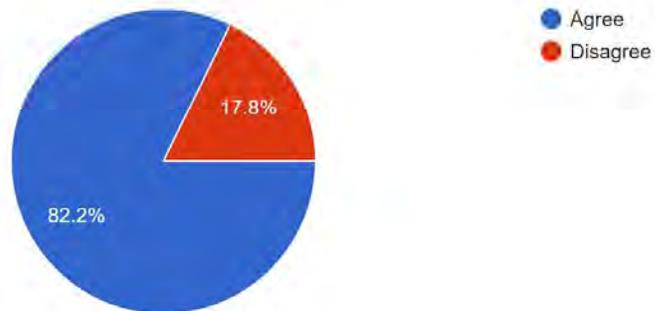
I was able to stop working by 5:30 PM.

45 responses



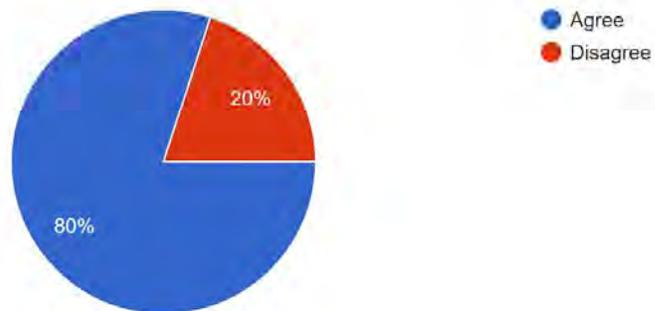
I did not take paperwork/school work home.

45 responses



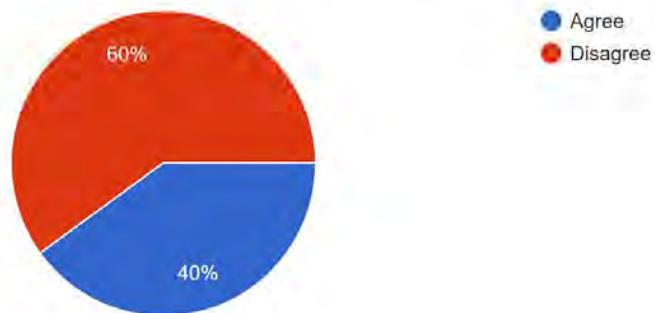
I did not talk on the phone related to school last night after 5:30 PM.

45 responses



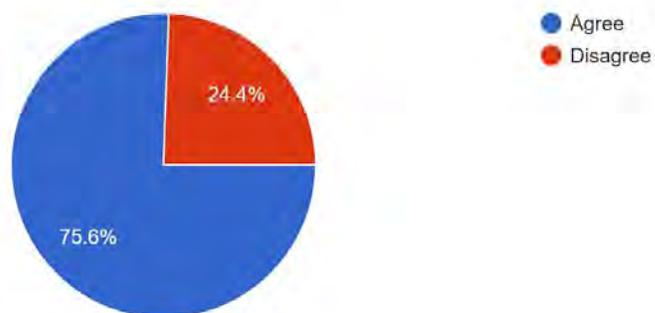
I did not email/text on the phone related to school last night after 5:30 PM.

45 responses



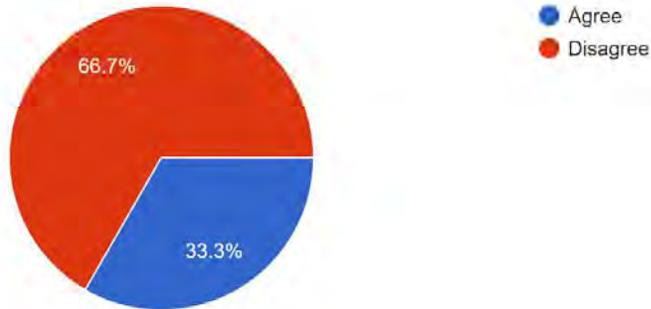
I did not talk about school at home last night.

45 responses

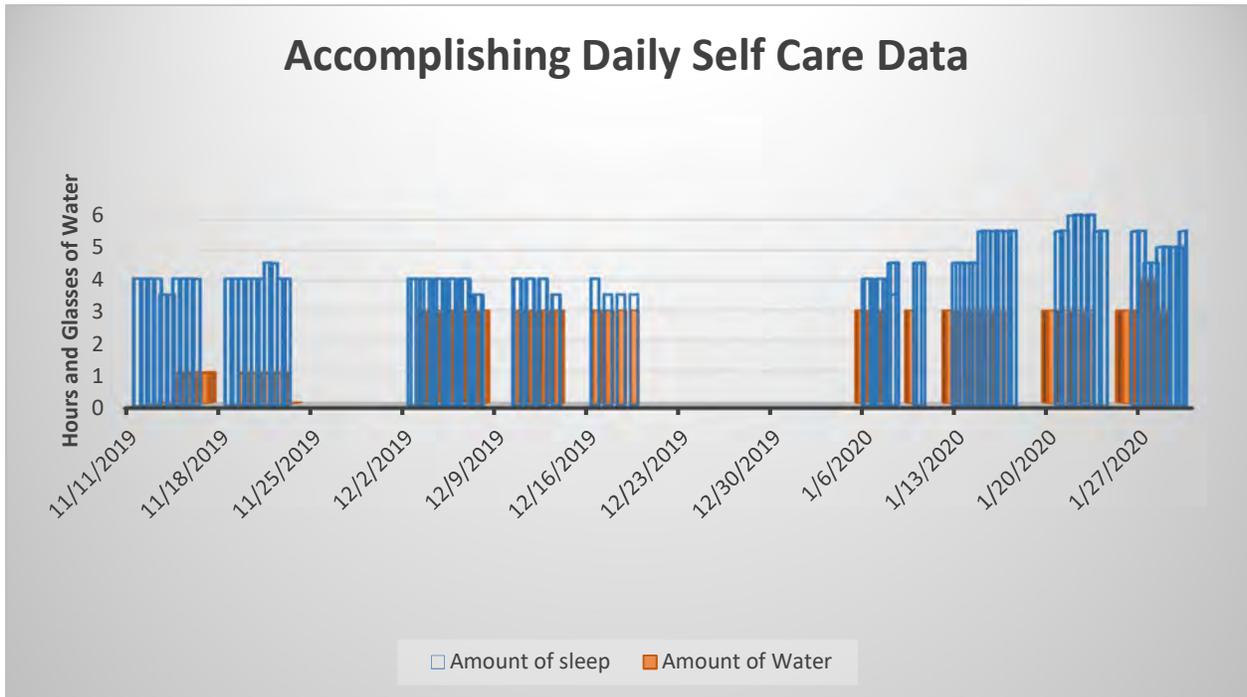


I did not work on Saturday/Sunday

12 responses



Self-Care Data:



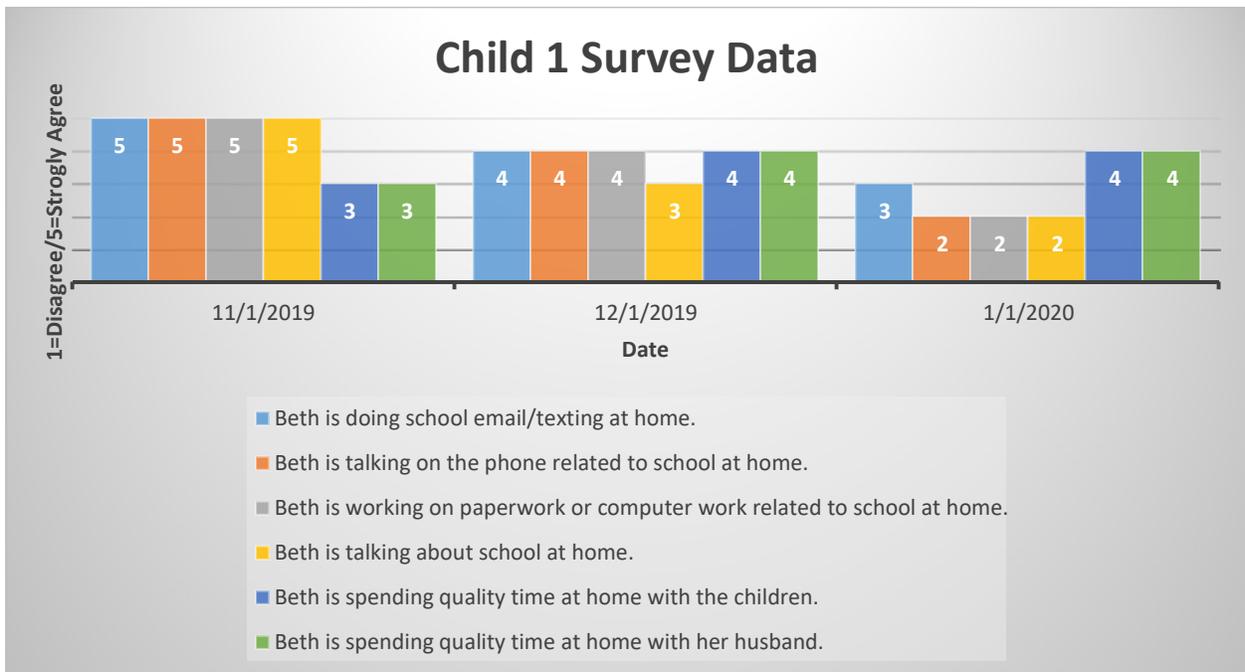
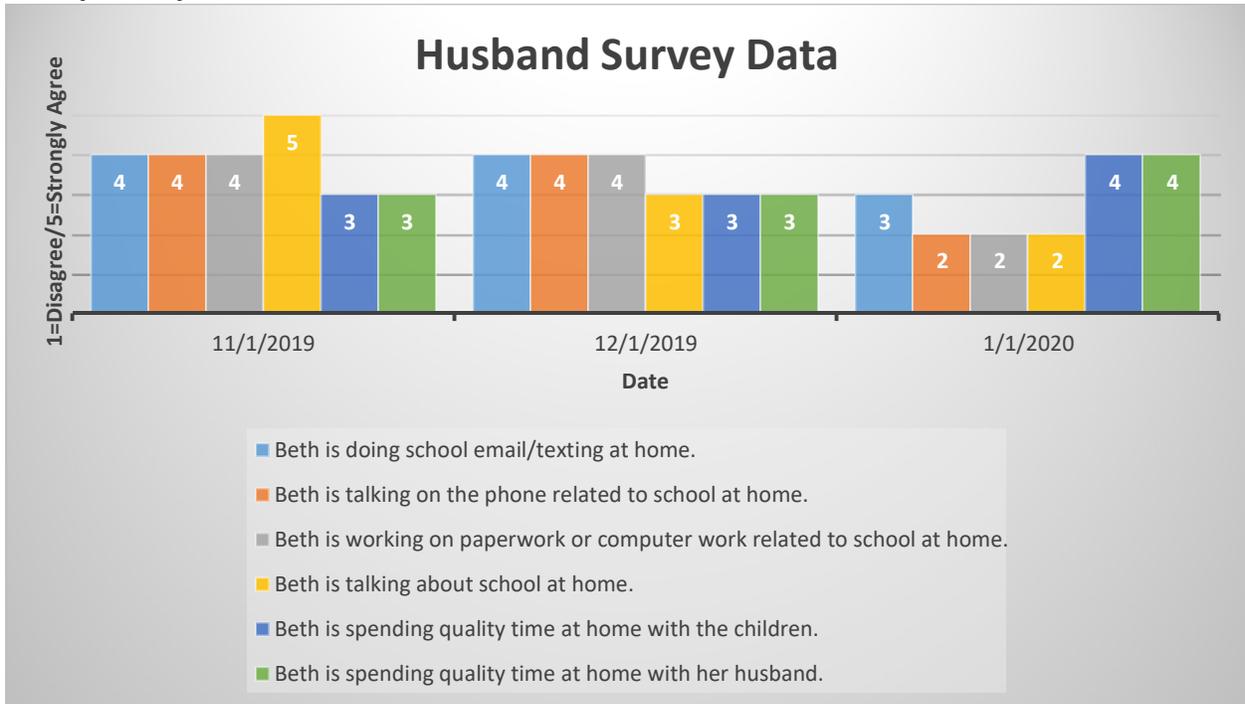
Accomplishing My Top Priorities Data:

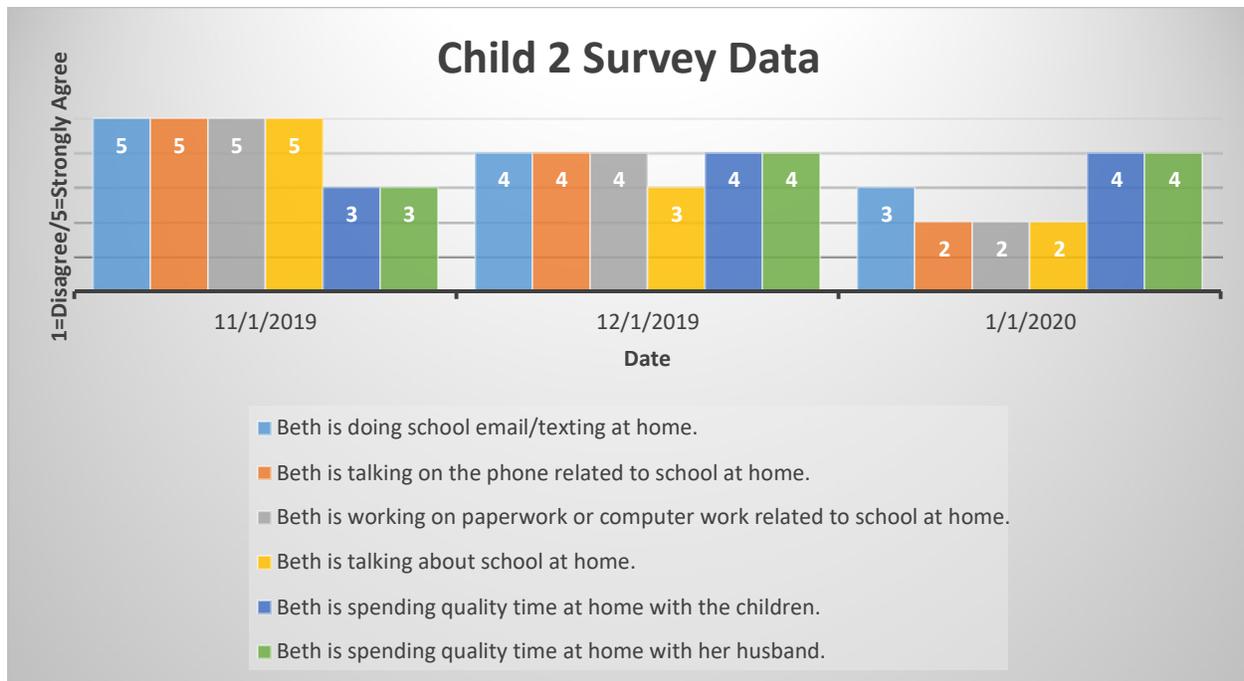


Personal and Professional Success Data:



Family Survey Data:





My Discoveries (Slides 18-21)

- **Learning Statement One: The strict boundaries I set for myself were nearly impossible to adhere to and caused more stress in the beginning of the AR project.**
 - After a month of data collection, it became very clear that my boundaries were causing more stress in my life. I was trying hard not to cheat on my boundaries set in place, but the data was showing I was not sleeping better, and I was feeling more overwhelmed both at work and at home. It was nearly impossible to go throughout the day and not check email on the fly or to leave at 5:30 with things on my to do list that really needed to be accomplished. This was evident through journal reflections and through my personal daily surveys. While I improved from an average of 3 to a 4 in personal success between 11/11/19 and 12/20/19, professional success remained stuck at a 3, sometimes dipping to a 2. The daily success rating correlated with whether or not I felt I was accomplishing my top priorities. I hovered around a 3 for both between 11/11/19 and 12/20/19. After 12/20/19, I began to see more consistent data between personal and professional stress. Both increased to an average of 4 between 1/13/20 and 1/27/20. Loosening my boundaries a little, but continuing to be intentional about my daily schedule gave me the grace I needed. As a result, I saw an increase in productivity at school and a more mindful me at home.

- **Learning Statement Two: A better balance between work and home helped me feel more successful both at work and at home (and my family noticed a positive difference).**
 - Not feeling successful at school was negatively impacting how successful I was at home. Self-care, accomplishing top priorities, and personal/professional stress all showed a positive increase after 12/20/19. Once I found a better balance between work and home, I was able to feel more productive in both settings. Initially, my family rated me a high 4 or 5 for questions related to doing work-related activities at home. They all rated me a 3 for questions related to spending quality time at home. At the end of the AR project, my family gave me a lower score (2-3) for doing work-related tasks at home, and they rated me higher (4) for spending quality time with them at home. Finding a better balance led to being able to accomplish more of my top priorities both at work and at home.
- **Learning Statement Three: The job of a principal-or any educator-is truly a 24/7 job.**
 - Initially I set pretty strict boundaries to try to help myself protect my time at work and my time at home. Despite making some changes mid-way and giving myself more grace with the boundaries I wanted to set, there is no way to completely cut off the work when I go home. With boundaries set in place, I was only able to stop working by 5:30 51.1% of the time. While I didn't talk on the phone after 5:30 80% of the time, I was only able to not email or text after 5:30 60% of the time. I tried hard to save my weekends for family only, but even then, I was only able to not work on weekends (at all 66.7% of the time). Teachers needed me, parents needed me, or something else related to the school needed me.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slides 22-24)

Through this project I have learned that restoring and maintaining balance in life an essential piece to self-care. I cannot be the best me personally or professionally if I am stressed, unorganized, or losing sight of what is important. I cannot help others if I do not take the time to help myself. I need to continue to set boundaries and prioritize my time, but I also need to give myself some grace when I fall short of this.

As an administrator, it is important that I model the importance of work/life balance with staff and students. We talk a lot at our school about social emotional learning, the importance of self-care, restoring balance when you experience a difficult day, grit, and having a growth mindset. As the school leader, I need to be able to walk the talk when it comes to being the self we can be.

As I was preparing the presentation of this project, our state decided to close schools due to Covid-19. On March 12th, we were in school operating as normal. March 13th was supposed to be our last day before spring break. We closed school on March 13th, went to remote learning (without being a 1:1 school or having any e-learning experience), and were forced to deal with

the stress of doing life and school in isolation. I am thankful I had conducted this AR project prior to this time. During remote learning between March 30-May 19th, I had to really prioritize my time working from home, helping my own children do school, and helping the hundreds of students and families from our school impacted by Covid-19. I look forward to getting back to school in the fall and being able to continue to improve my work/life balance.

Bibliography (Slide 25)

- Brown, Brené. (2012). *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. New York: Gotham Books.
- Robbins, Tony (1992). *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical & Financial Destiny!* New York: Simon & Schuster.

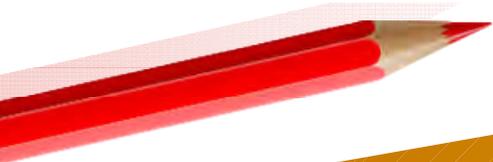
Citing Your Presentation and Publication

Presentation:

- **Henry, E. (2020). Being the Best Me- Personally and Professionally! Presented at the annual Indiana Principal Leadership Institute Action Research Showcase, Indianapolis, IN.**

Publication:

- **Henry, E. (2020). Being the Best Me-Personally and Professionally! Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/KaH9mfZP0xs>**



IPLI
Cohort 7
Action
Research
Project
Year 1

Being the Best
Me-Personally and
Professionally!

Beth Henry
Southwest Elementary School
bhenry@gws.k12.in.us





Background

SCHOOL INFORMATION:

- Southwest Elementary
- Greenwood Community School Corporation
- 550+Students
- 60+ Staff Members
- No assistant principal

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

- Wife/mother to 2 teenage daughters
- We live in Brown County, Indiana
- My kids also attend GCSC as transfer students
- Dogs, cats, and chickens!



Family needs
Texts
E-mail
PAPERWORK!
To-do lists get longer!
Staff needs
Phone calls
PAPERWORK!
Student needs



Purpose of the Inquiry

The purpose of my action inquiry was to find a better balance between work and home. I want to avoid burn out and stress in my job, be more mindful of the needs of my family when I'm at home, and ultimately, be an all-around better version of me both personally and professionally.



My Wondering...

How do I become a better me both personally and professionally?

I wondered if committing to personal and professional boundaries would help me stay more balanced and productive at work and at home.

This initial wondering led to additional questions:

- Will being more intentional about my time help lower levels of stress and feelings of burnout?
- Will finding a solid balance between work and life have a positive impact on my health?
- Will finding a personal and professional balance help me be a better administrator?
- Will I be able to sustain this balance over time-especially if positive results occur?



My Actions

STEP 1: Set Boundaries

Implement professional work boundaries:

- Leave school by 5:30 PM (unless emergency)
- No checking or sending emails after 5:30 PM
- No phone calls or texts related to school after 5:30 PM (unless emergency)
- Intentional daily calendar
- No responding/checking email on the go-only during scheduled times as much as possible
- No taking paperwork/computer work home (unless absolutely necessary)
- No working on Saturdays or Sundays (unless absolutely necessary)

Implement personal/home boundaries:

- No checking or sending work emails after 5:30 PM
- No school-related phone calls or texting after 5:30 PM (unless emergency)
- Intentional daily calendar
- No paperwork or computer work once home (unless absolutely necessary)
- No working on Saturdays or Sundays (unless absolutely necessary)



My Actions

STEP 2: Notify colleagues and my family



My Actions

STEP 3: Start Daily Journaling and Answering Survey Questions

The image shows a digital survey form titled "Beth Henry IPLI AR Project Revised". The form includes a "Form description" field, a "Date" field with a calendar icon, and two Likert scale questions. The first question is "How would you rate the success of the day?" and the second is "I was able to accomplish my top priorities today." Both questions have a 5-point scale from "Horrible" to "FANTASTIC!".

Beth Henry IPLI AR Project Revised
Form description

Date *
Month, day, year

How would you rate the success of the day? *

Horrible 1 2 3 4 5 FANTASTIC!

I was able to accomplish my top priorities today. *

Horrible 1 2 3 4 5 FANTASTIC

My Actions

STEP 4: Survey my family three times throughout the course of the research



The image shows a survey form titled "IPLI Family Survey" with a "Form Description" section. It contains three Likert scale questions, each with a 5-point scale from "Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

IPLI Family Survey
Form Description

Beth is doing school email/texting at home.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Beth is talking on the phone related to school at home.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Beth is working on paperwork or computer work related to school at home.

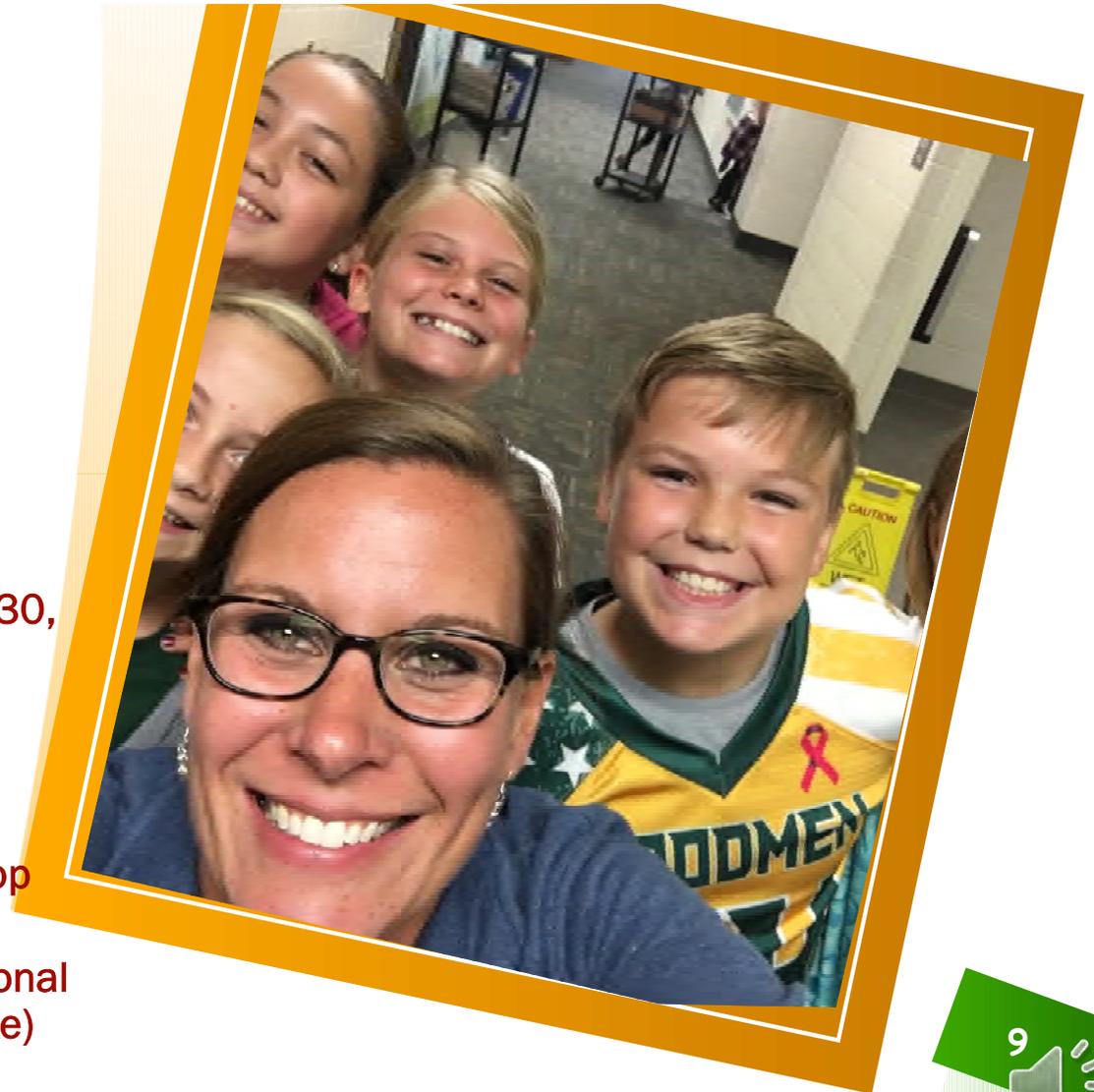
1 2 3 4 5

Data Collection

Process:

Data was collected over an eight week period of time from November 11, 2019 through January 30, 2020. Data included:

- Journaling daily
- Calendar tracking—did I adhere to my personal and professional boundaries?
- Calendar tracking—did I accomplish my top priorities?
- Calendar tracking—did I accomplish personal care each day (water, exercise, food intake)
- Informal surveys with family



Journal Samples

Difficult Work Day Journal

11/12/2019-Today was a rough day. I had a lot of things on my OPEN calendar to take care of today. Unfortunately, most of that didn't happen. I spent the morning in a meeting that lasted an hour longer than anticipated. I wanted to do a walk about in the school, but that didn't happen. I was supposed to have lunch with a student and that didn't happen. I also was supposed to have a student come down for a sensory break at the end of the day and that didn't happen. We had a domestic issue where two parents showed up to pick their child up from school and neither wanted the child to go with the other. I had to call GPD to come help me sort out the paperwork and what to do. They ended up letting the kid decide and convincing the mom to compromise with the dad and let him go with his dad. It was a sad situation and not easy to deal with. That took up my entire afternoon and ate into the PLC time which was team planning. Hard day.

Journal Sample

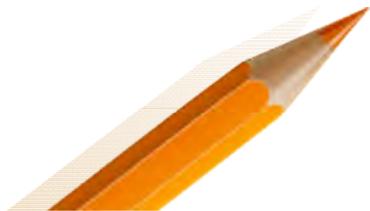
Great Day Journal!

1/13/2020-Today was a good day. I was able to get my top priorities accomplished. I am also leaving after dismissal to watch Avery cheer at a bball game with Maura. Tonight is NOT a night I am taking work home. Feels good. And, get this, I slept 4.5 hours straight last night!! WOW! I think drinking more water is helping!



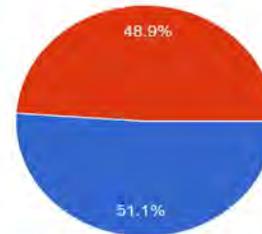
Data Collection

Adhering to Personal and Professional Boundaries



I was able to stop working by 5:30 PM.

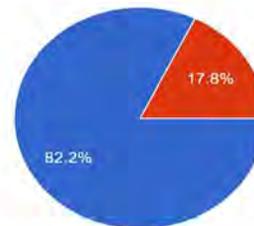
45 responses



● Agree
● Disagree

I did not take paperwork/school work home.

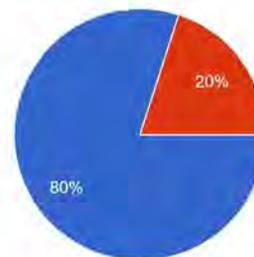
45 responses



● Agree
● Disagree

I did not talk on the phone related to school last night after 5:30 PM.

45 responses



● Agree
● Disagree

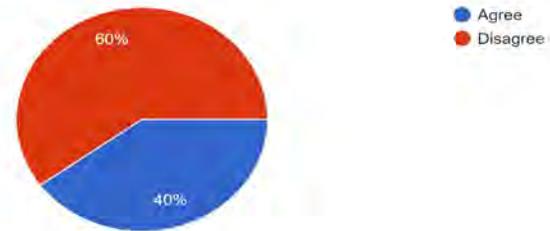


Data Collection

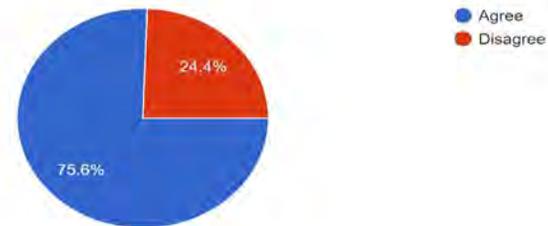
Adhering to Personal and Professional Boundaries



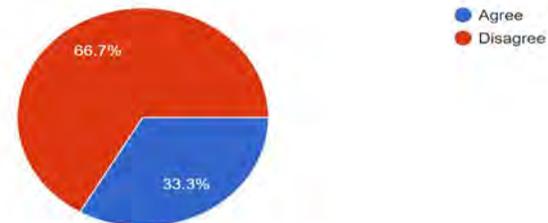
I did not email/text on the phone related to school last night after 5:30 PM.
45 responses



I did not talk about school at home last night.
45 responses

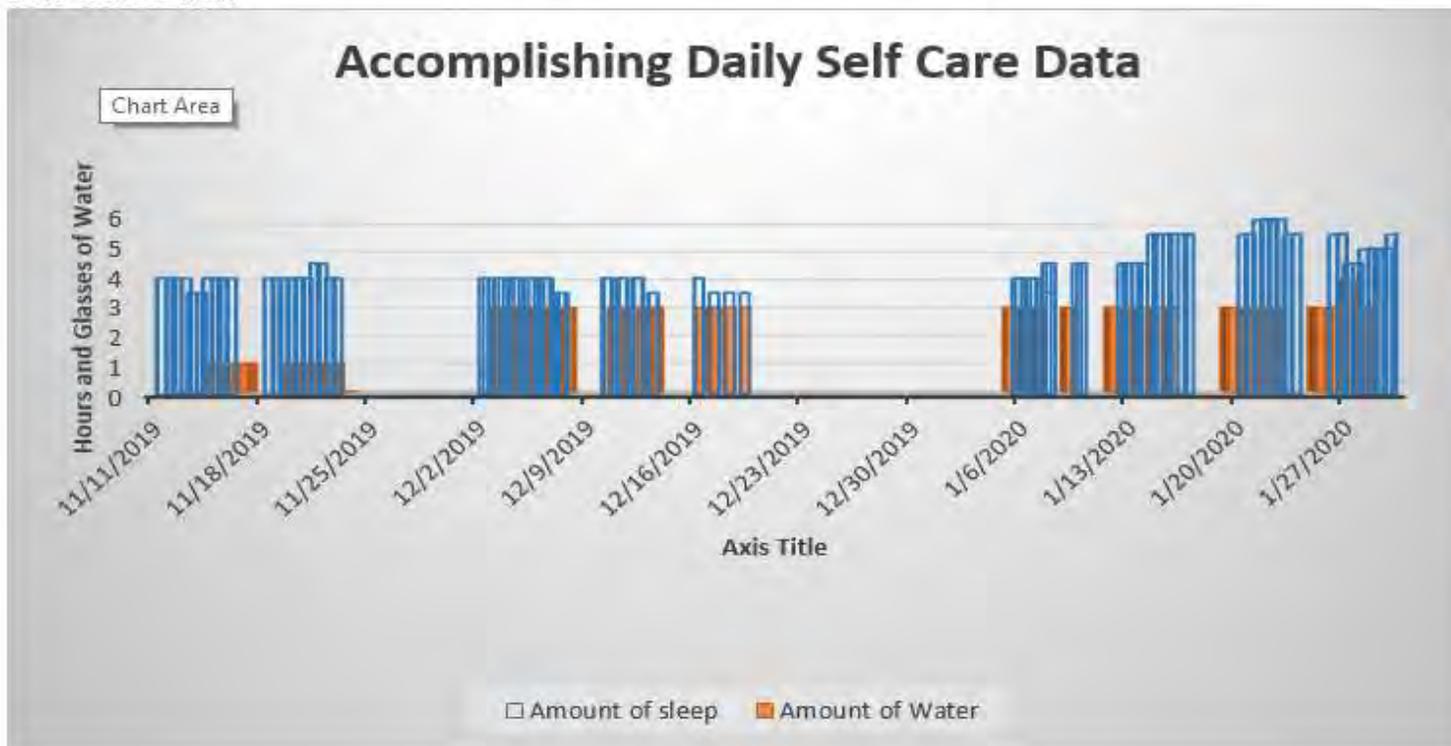


I did not work on Saturday/Sunday
12 responses



Data Collection

Self-Care Data:



Data Collection

Accomplishing My Top Priorities Data:



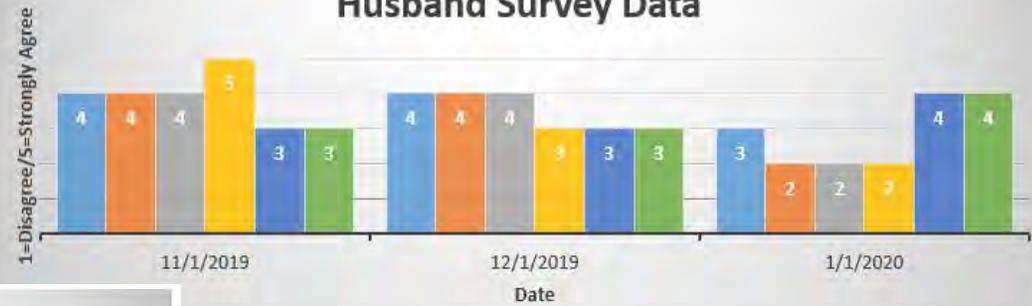
Data Collection



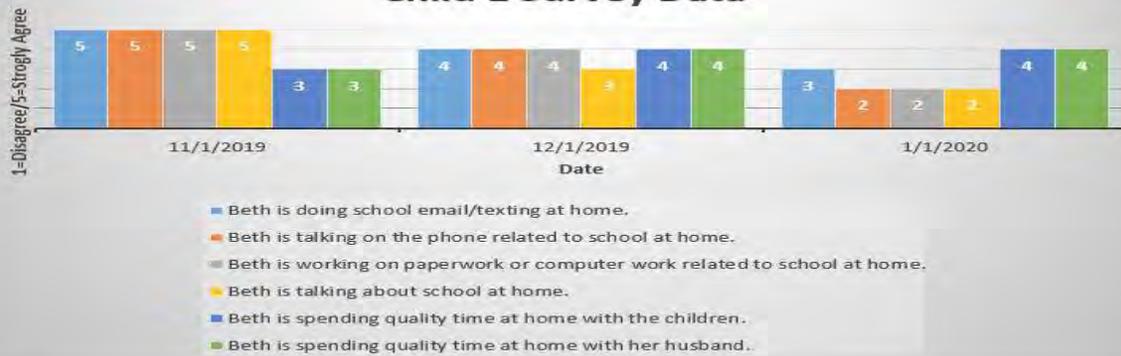
Data Collection

Family Survey Data:

Husband Survey Data

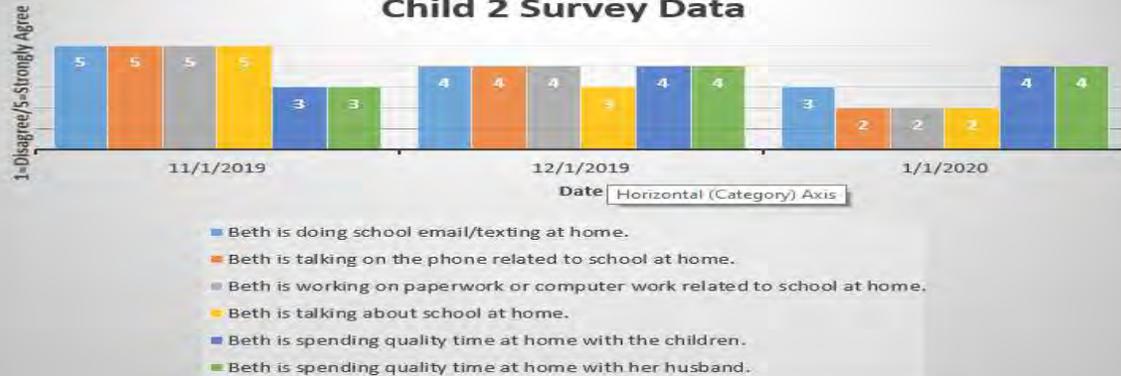


Child 1 Survey Data



- Beth is doing school email/texting at home.
- Beth is talking on the phone related to school at home.
- Beth is working on paperwork or computer work related to school at home.
- Beth is talking about school at home.
- Beth is spending quality time at home with the children.
- Beth is spending quality time at home with her husband.

Child 2 Survey Data



My Discoveries



Learning Statement One: The strict boundaries I set for myself were nearly impossible to adhere to and caused more stress in the beginning of the AR project.

Learning Statement Two: A better balance between work and home helped me feel more successful both at work and at home (and my family noticed a positive difference).

Learning Statement Three: The job of a principal-or any educator-is truly a 24/7 job.



Strict Boundaries Were Too Hard to Adhere to!

- After 1 month of the AR project, my boundaries were causing MORE stress in my life!
- It was impossible to always leave by 5:30.
- It was impossible to not check email throughout the day and not leave with over 20 emails left over for the following day.

Accomplishing My Top Priorities Data:



A better balance between work and home helped me feel more successful both at work and at home (and my family noticed a positive difference).



Data	Before 12/20/2020	After 12/20/2020
Accomplishing Top Priorities	Average of 3	Average of 4
Success of the Day	Average of 3	Average of 4
Self-Care (sleep)	Average of 4 hours/night	Average of 5.5 hours/night
Personal Stress	Average of 3	Average of 4
Professional Stress	Average of 2.5	Average of 4
Family Survey-Work Tasks at Home	Average of 4.5	Average of 2.5
Family Survey-Spending Time w/Family	Average of 3	Average of 4

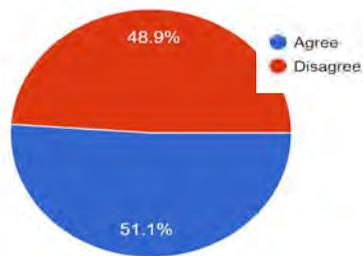


The job of a principal-or any educator-is truly a 24/7 job.

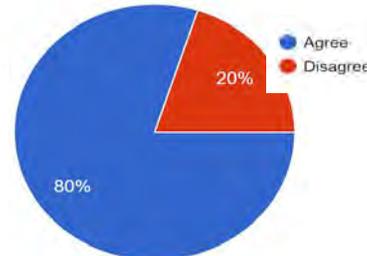


Open
24/7

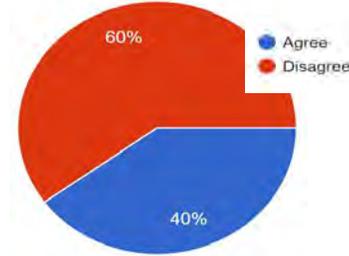
Despite changes mid-way that helped me find a good balance...



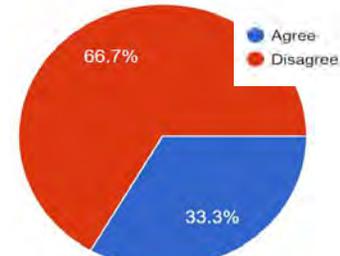
I Stopped working by 5:30-51.1% of the time.



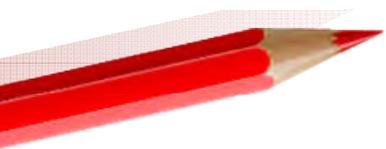
I did not talk on the phone after 5:30-80% of the time.



I did not text/email after 5:30-40% of the time



I didn't work on weekends-33.3% of the time.



What's Next?

**RESTORING AND MAINTAINING
BALANCE IN LIFE IS ESSENTIAL TO
SELF-CARE!**

I cannot be the best me personally or professionally if I am stressed, unorganized, or losing sight of what is important. I cannot help others if I do not take the time to help myself. I need to continue to set boundaries and prioritize my time, but I also need to give myself some grace when I fall short of this.

JOY COMES TO US
IN THE ORDINARY
MOMENTS. WE
RISK MISSING OUT
WHEN WE GET
TOO BUSY CHASING
DOWN THE
EXTRAORDINARY.

-Brené Brown-

What's Next?

AS A SCHOOL LEADER, I NEED TO MODEL THE IMPORTANCE OF A WORK/LIFE BALANCE WITH STAFF AND STUDENTS!

We talk a lot at our school about Social Emotional Learning, the importance of self-care, restoring balance when you experience a difficult day/moment, showing grit, and having a growth mindset. As the school leader, I need to be able to walk the talk when it comes to working hard to be the best me I can be.

"I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness--it's right in front of me if I'm paying attention and practicing gratitude."

- BRENE BROWN

What's Next?

CONTINUE TO PRACTICE AND WORK ON BEING THE BEST ME I CAN BE-AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL!

As I was preparing the presentation of this project, our state decided to close schools due to Covid-19. On March 12th, we were in school operating as normal. March 13th was supposed to be our last day before spring break. We closed school on March 13th. After spring break went to remote learning (without being a 1:1 school or having any e-learning experience), and were forced to deal with the stress of doing life and school in isolation. I am thankful I had conducted this AR project prior to this time. During remote learning between March 30-May 19th, I had to really prioritize my time between working from home, helping my own children do school, and helping the hundreds of students and families from our school impacted by Covid-19. I look back on this time with feelings of success! I'm not sure that would have been the case had I not been thinking about the importance of balancing priorities. I look forward to getting back to school in the fall and being able to continue to work on being the best me I can be-at home and at school!



Southwest students showing love to staff during our car parade.



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Beth Henry
bhenry@gws.k12.in.us
317-889-4092

Southwest Elementary

