



Better Communication/Better Relationships

Charter School of the Dunes

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Background Leading to this Inquiry

- Parent complaints going to board/authorizer
- Spending too much time on phone
- Feedback from teachers, peers, and family
- Yearly review



Purpose of This Inquiry

- The purpose of my action inquiry was to improve my communication skills to improve my relationships.



My Wondering

- How can I improve my communication skills to form stronger relationships personally and professionally?



My Actions

- Books
 - Culture Code – Daniel Coyle
 - Fierce Conversations- Susan Craig Scott M.D.
- Podcast
 - Engaging Leader with Jesse Lahey



My Actions

- Use the screen time app on iPhone.
- Respond to email within 24 hours.
- Turned off voicemail.
- Bought a fidget/stress “toy”



My Actions

- Be an active listener- repeat to speaker to ensure I understand what they are saying.
- Sit next to the other person instead of across a desk.
- Make sure emails are professional.
- Look for ways to compromise.



Data Collection

- Field notes
- Interviews- Teachers, assistant principal, family
- Journals
- Surveys



My Data

- Zero complaints to the board/authorizer.
- Surveys from staff were more positive.
- My journal reflections were showing more positive interactions.



My Discoveries

- Communication is key in any relationship.
- As a leader it is imperative I listen and respond in a caring manner.
- My life has less stress when I am deliberate in my communications with others.



Where Am I Heading Next

- Without continued improvement of my communication skills, I will not be an effective leader.
- Continue having a growth mindset.
- Understand that I must be a lifelong learner and continue to improve both professionally and personally.



Bibliography

- Dweck, Carol S.. (2008) *Mindset :the new psychology of success* New York : Ballantine Books,
- Scott, S. (2002). *Fierce conversations: Achieving success at work & in life, one conversation at a time*. New York, N.Y: Viking.
- Coyle, D. (2018). *The culture code: the secrets of highly successful groups*. First edition. New York: Bantam Books.



Better Communication/Better Relationships

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Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)

Relationships are key to being a competent school leader. Positive relationships with parents, school staff, and students be positive or negative based on how well I communicate. I realized from a number of factors that my communication skills aren't what they need to be. We were receiving complaints and negative feedback partly based on how I was communicating with parents. Along with parents, teachers were not receiving adequate communication from me whether it was email or in person. It made me reflect on how I was doing things as a leader and what was best for our school.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to improve my communication skills to improve my relationships.

My Wondering (Slide 4)

With this purpose, I wondered how I can improve my communication skills to form stronger relationships personally and professionally.

My Actions (Slide 5-7)

I decided to take action on my wondering by studying on how to be a better communicator and put some simple practices in place to help me on my way. The first thing I did was read a book that was recommended to me by another school administrator. Culture Code by Daniel Coyle really put in perspective how my communication skills and leadership can send us down a positive or negative path. There were examples of many successful groups that created a positive culture and the steps the leaders took to get there. The second book I read was Fierce Conversations by Susan Craig Scott M.D. This book helped me gain confidence in having those difficult conversations while keeping the positive relationship. Finally I found a podcast called the Engaging Leader with Jesse Lahey. This podcast talks to leaders on how improving communication skills can create engaged employees.

While I was reading books and listening to podcasts, I looked for ways to improve immediately. The first thing I did was to use the screen time app on my iPhone. After a few days, it was obvious that I spent way too much time on my phone and not enough time listening. I also looked at how I communicated through email and phone conversations. I told all of my staff and parents that I was committed to respond to all emails within 24 hours. It was also

important on how my emails sounded. I received feedback that my emails could be short and therefore not always professional. I immediately made sure that I was more mindful when sending emails. I also changed the way I returned phone calls. With all of my tasks throughout the day and not being in my office, I constantly forgot to check my voicemail so I turned it off. This caused people to communicate with me through email which I have access to at any time. Finally, I did some simple communication techniques such as repeating what others say and sitting next to people instead of across a desk or table.

Data Collection (Slide 8)

The data collection was based on field notes, interviews, journal entries, and surveys of parents and teachers.

My Data (Slides 9)

The first piece of data I looked at was the parent complaints to the board or our charter authorizer. We had zero complaints once I started my action research project and put the plans in place.

I decided to involve teachers, my assistant principal, and my family in my project. I sat with them to have candid conversations about my progress and how I can improve. These conversations helped me understand what I was doing that worked and what did not.

The use of a journal helped me reflect on conversations I had throughout the day. I used this for especially difficult conversations and tried to figure out ways I could have communicated better.

The final piece of data was staff surveys. These showed me anonymously how my staff felt about my leadership and communication skills. I used these surveys to make immediate improvements such as differentiating staff meetings. Overall, there was significant improvement of staff satisfaction with me and my leadership team.

My Discoveries (Slide 10)

The obvious discovery was that communication is key in any relationship. The conversations I had while collecting data helped me understand how I can improve those relationships by being a better listener.

As a leader it is imperative that I listen and respond in a caring manner. While I heard what others were saying, I wasn't truly listening all of the time. This came out in the amount of time I spent on my phone checking email or texting.

My life has less stress when I am deliberate in my communication with others. In my journal data, I reflected on how much easier I was handling situations as I improved my communication skills.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 11)

I am continually trying to improve how I communicate with others. While it is still a challenge, I make it a priority to stay off of my phone when speaking with others. I know I must have a growth mindset and continue to learn about being an educator and a leader.

Bibliography (Slide 12)

- Dweck, Carol S.. (2008) *Mindset :the new psychology of success* New York : Ballantine Books,
- Scott, S. (2002). *Fierce conversations: Achieving success at work & in life, one conversation at a time*. New York, N.Y: Viking.
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