

# Praise In Action / Action Research Project:

Hawthorne Elementary School  
Gregory D. Butler  
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# Background Leading to My Inquiry

Focus:

Leading Indicator 1.7: The success of the whole school, as well as individuals within the school, is appropriately acknowledged.

Why:

After reviewing the level one and two data, it was clear that 1.7 would be the best first step in responding to the information shared in the data. On September 21, 2021, we learned that standard deviations above 1 would be areas of concern. While there were two other areas with similar standard deviations, we felt that this one could be addressed first and have the greatest impact in the short and long term.

# The Purpose of My Inquiry

Find ways to praise staff in the manner they prefer in order to impact the staff's perception of receiving adequate acknowledgment and celebrations?

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# My Wonderings

I wondered:

- What were the acknowledgements from last year?
  - How was previous acknowledgement received?
  - In what ways do people like to feel acknowledged and celebrated?
  - What resources are available to support celebrations and acknowledgements?
  - *Did acknowledgement from other staff and families impact this data?*
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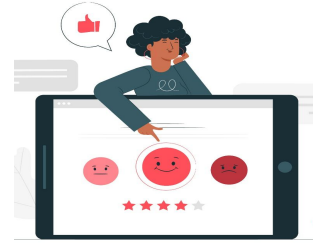
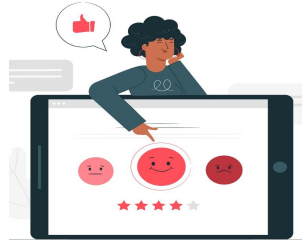
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  - *\*Have the teacher leaders find out what is working and what is not. How can they lead this instead of me?*
-

# My Actions



## Get Focused

- Reflection
- Discussed data with teacher leaders.
- Discussed what I have done in the past to acknowledge staff.

## Survey Staff

Analyzed information and notes to determine next steps.

## Adjust

Made some adjustments to acknowledgements based on feedback.

## Survey Staff

Reviewed information and notes to determine next steps.

# Data Collection

## Qualitative Data Collection:

- Journal reflections  
“Brain-based Literacy Instruction”
- Small group reflections
- Staff PD

## Quantitative Data Collection:

- Leadership self-assessment
  - Staff PD survey NOV and FEB
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# Survey One Data

# Survey Two Data

What are ways (in the past) you have felt appreciation from Admin?

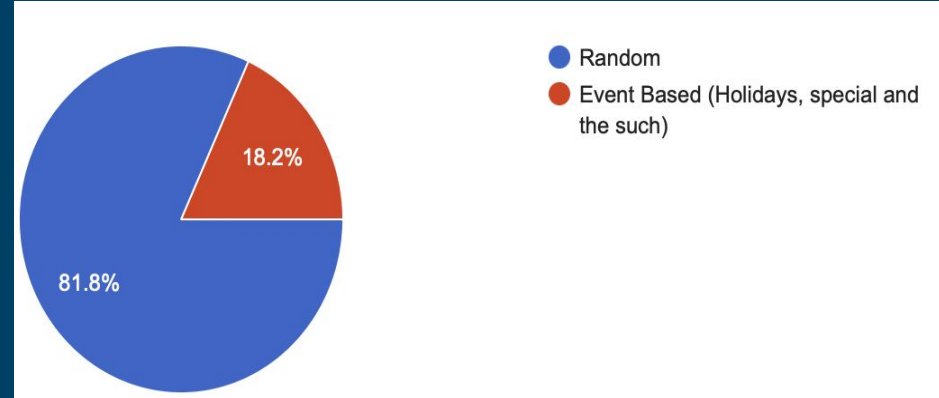
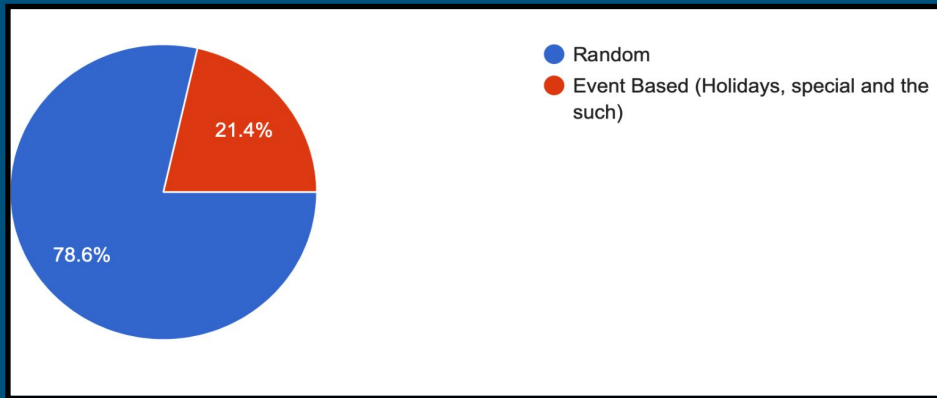
- Most spoke about the “typical” things:
    - Jeans days
    - Positive notes / emails
    - Face to face praise
    - Newsletter shout outs
  - \*\*Saying Good Morning early and often!!!
- Quite a few added the following:
    - Treats!!!
    - Lunch
    - Hours
  - Getting to know the real admin and them getting to know me
  - Verbal feedback!
-



# Survey One Data

# Survey Two Data

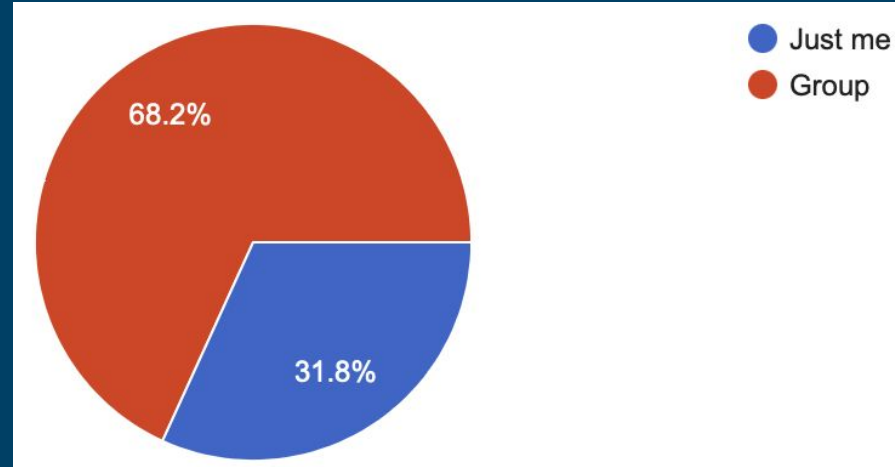
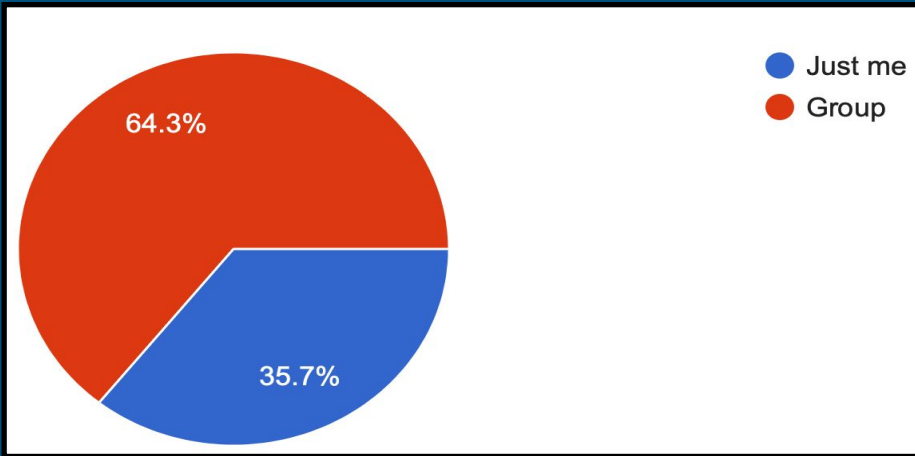
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# Survey One Data

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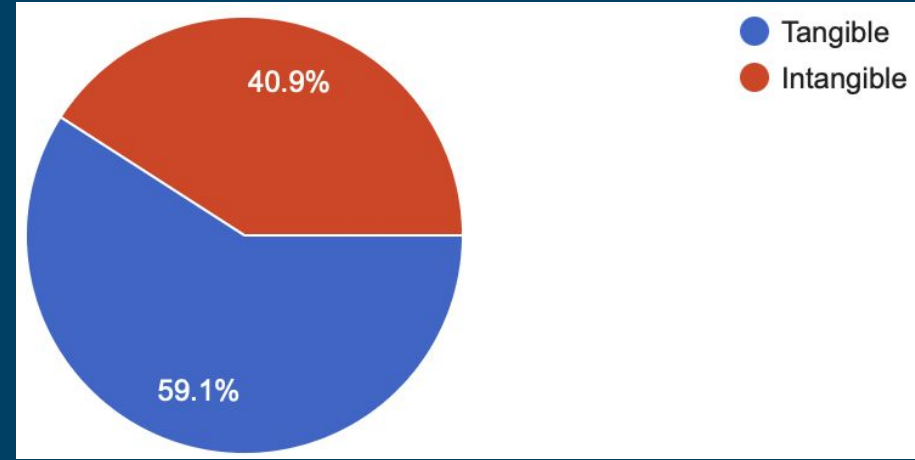
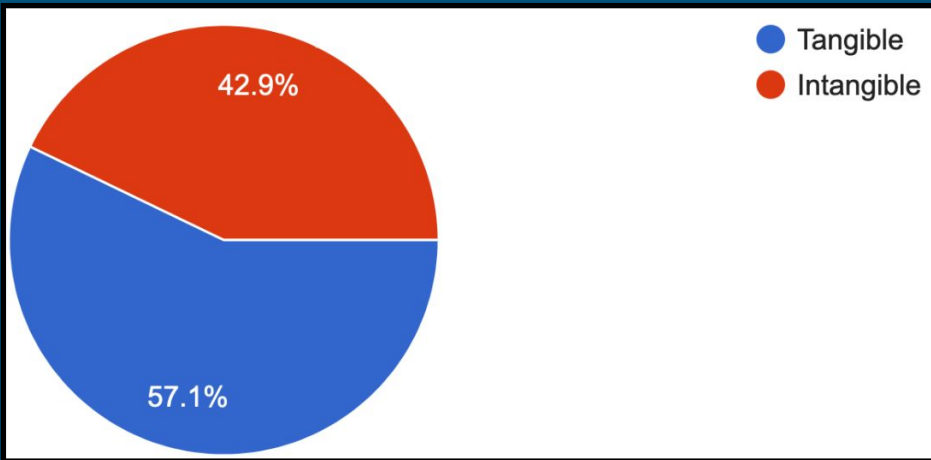
Was the last appreciation just you or a group?



# Survey One Data

# Survey Two Data

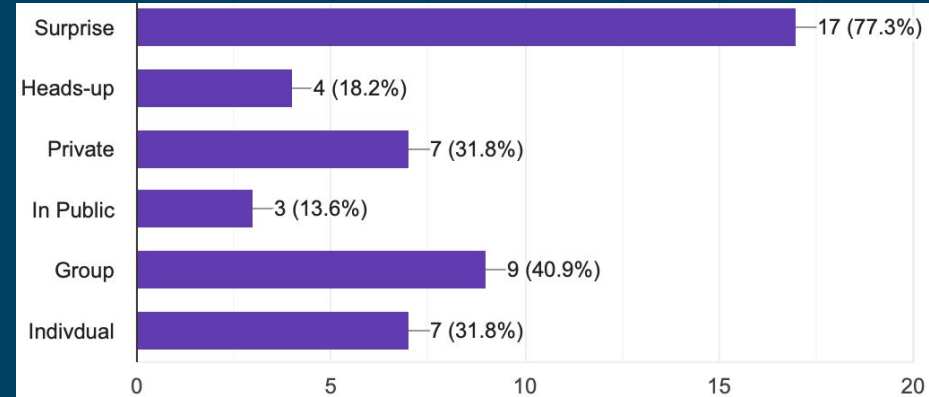
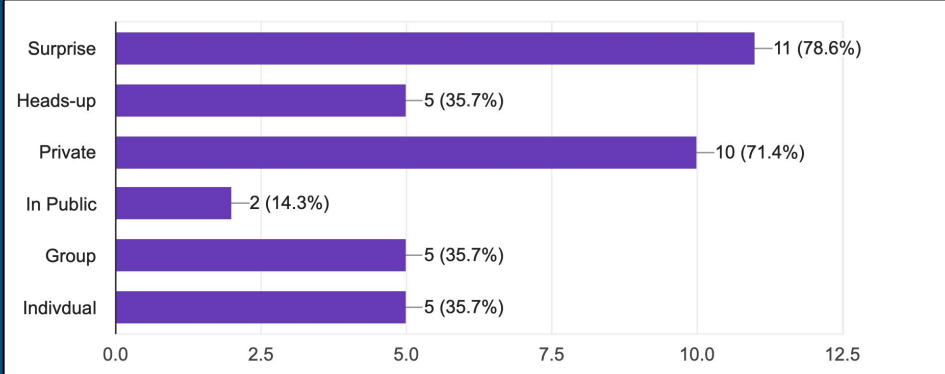
Tangible v Intangible, which is better?



# Survey One Data

# Survey Two Data

How would you like to be appreciated in the future?



# Survey One Data

# Survey Two Data

Any additional thoughts or suggestions?

- More than 70% of responses felt staff appreciation is well.
- 25% gave suggestions
  - Two of these were put into practice
  - One is on the list for next year as it is going to take some additional planning

- More than 70% of responses were positive feedback about appreciation.
  - Notice that we are working hard.
  - “Show staff you know this job is not easy!”
  - Spirit wear
  - **Be Intentional!**
-

# My Discoveries

## Show & Tell

The evidence is clear that I am on the right path with acknowledging staff. It is also clear that there is room for growth. One of the biggest things that stuck out to me was the desire to speak with me or hear from me. Some respondents want a little small talk about life outside school while others want to hear what they are doing well.

## Numbers Don't Lie?

When I look at various surveys given by the township, myself or other teachers, the response rate here at Hawthorne is generally poor unless response rates are tracked. I have to find a way to help improve our response rates. If data drives everything, then we have to be driven to support the collection of accurate and timely staff focused data.

# Where I Am Heading Next

The ultimate goal is to keep making praise a greater part of our school culture.

- Keep putting in the effort to praise, acknowledge and celebrate.
- Keep finding the best places to put in effort.
- Move from quantity to quality.
- Get the dean more involved.
- Get teachers more involved in these efforts.
- Improve the perception and relevance of data focused around staff.

# Citing My Presentation & Publication **INCOMPLETE**

## Presentation:

Butler, G. (2022). Foundations Matter Action Research Project. Presented at the annual Indiana Principal Leadership Institute Action Research Showcase, Indianapolis, IN.

## Publication:

Butler, G. (2022). Praise in action / action research project. Retrieved from <https://www.gabrielbutler.com/>

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## Background:

Leading Indicator 1.7: The success of the whole school, as well as individuals within the school, is appropriately acknowledged.

## My Wonderings:

- What were the acknowledgements from last year?
- How was previous acknowledgement received?
- In what ways do people like to feel acknowledged and celebrated?
- What resources are available to support celebrations and acknowledgements?

## My Actions



### Get Focused

- Reflection
- Discussed data with teacher leaders.
- Discussed what I have done in the past to acknowledge staff.



### Survey Staff

Analyzed information and notes to determine next steps.



### Adjust

Made some adjustments to acknowledgements based on feedback.



### Survey Staff

Reviewed information and notes to determine next steps.

## Next Steps

- Keep putting in the effort to praise, acknowledge and celebrations.
- Keep finding the best places to put in efforts.
- Move from quantity to quality.
- Get the dean more involved.
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## Praise In Action *Action Research Project*

### Survey One Data

Any additional thoughts or suggestions?

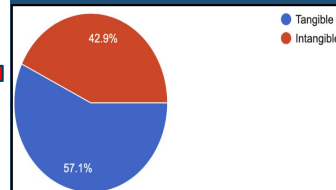
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  - Two of these were put into practice
  - One is on the list for next year as it is going to take some additional planning

### Survey Two Data

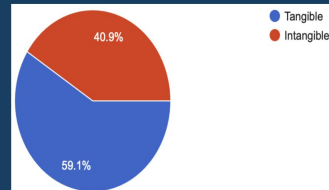
- More than 70% of responses were positive feedback about appreciation.
- Notice that we are working hard.
- "Show staff you know this job is not easy!"
- Spirit wear
- **Be Intentional!**

### Survey One Data

Tangible v Intangible, which is better?



### Survey Two Data



## My Discoveries

**Show & Tell**  
**Numbers Don't Lie?**

Praise In Action  
INQUIRY BRIEF  
Greg Butler

**Purpose:**

After reviewing the Level one and level two data, we agreed that 1.7 would be the best first step in responding to the information shared in the data. On September 21, 2021, we learned that standard deviations above 1 would be areas of concern. While there were two other areas with similar standard deviations, we felt that this one could be addressed first and have the greatest impact in the short and long term.

Leading Indicator 1.7: The success of the whole school, as well as individuals within the school, is appropriately acknowledged.

#	Field	Mean Out of 5	Standard Deviation	Count
1	Our school's accomplishments have been adequately acknowledged and celebrated.	3.94	1.11	17
2	My team's or department's accomplishments have been adequately acknowledged and celebrated.	3.76	1.16	17
3	My individual accomplishments have been adequately acknowledged and celebrated.	3.61	1.16	18
4	School leaders acknowledge and celebrate individual accomplishments, teacher- team or department accomplishments, and whole-school accomplishments in a variety of ways (for example, through faculty celebrations, newsletters to parents, announcements, the school website, or social media).	3.88	1.18	17
5	School leaders regularly celebrate the successes of individuals in a variety of positions in the school (such as teachers or support staff).	3.88	1.28	17

Moving from top to bottom, the standard deviation continues to grow. This information also moves from the school, to the team and to the teacher; moving from top to bottom. The fact that the mean stays above 3.5 and the standard deviation is that large, illustrates a large number of staff feel this indicator is fine and with a number of staff feeling this is definitely an area that needs improvement. Those that feel this as an improvement area, likely feel under- appreciated in more than one way. This was their opportunity to communicate dissatisfaction anonymously. Therefore the purpose of this action research was to find ways to improve how individual staff and the staff as a whole are appreciated in the manner that satisfies their need for acknowledgement.

**Question (Wondering):**

With this purpose, we wonder, "How might praising staff members in the manner they prefer impacts the staff's perception of receiving adequate acknowledgment and celebrations?"

Sub Questions:

- What were the acknowledgements from last year?
- How was previous acknowledgement received?

- In what ways do people like to feel acknowledged and celebrated?
- What resources are available to support celebrations and acknowledgements?
- Did acknowledgement from other staff and families impact this data?
- \*Have the teacher leaders find out what is working and what is not. How can they lead this instead of me?

### **Method (What will we be doing):**

To gain insights into our wonderings, we

- Asked staff a few questions about current celebrations.
  - Asked staff about their personal preference in celebrations and acknowledgments.
    - i. Asked students to complete a love list (A sheet with various fun categories and teachers added an item they enjoy from the list.)
      - Do this again in a live staff meeting.

### **Data Collection:**

To gain the best insights into our wonderings, we

- Staff survey:
  - List of questions:
    - i. What are ways in the past that you have felt appreciated from Admin?
    - ii. Was it random or connected to an event or time of year?
    - iii. Was this just you or in a group?
    - iv. Tangible v Intangible
    - v. How would you like to be appreciated in the future:
      - Random
      - Set time
      - Surprise v. Heads Up

### **Calendar (timeline):**

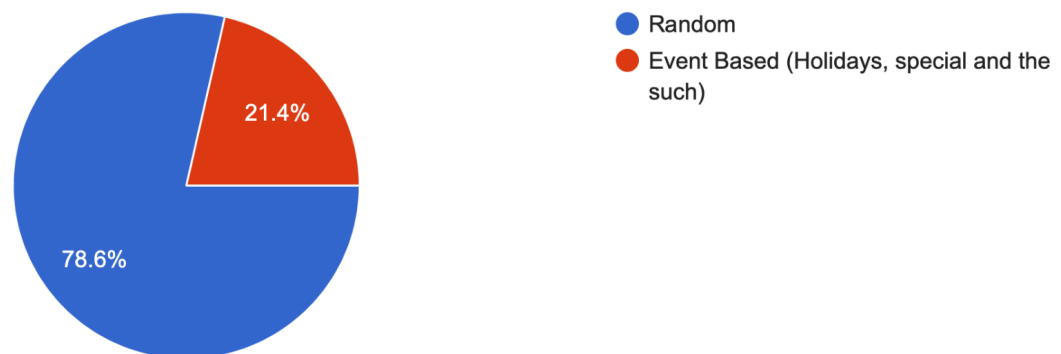
- ❖ September -
  - Work as a team to create questions
    - What are ways in the past that you have felt appreciated from Admin?
    - Was it random or connected to an event or time of year?
    - Was this just you or a group?
    - Tangible v Intangible which is better?
    - How would you like to be appreciated in the future:
      - Put these in order by preference:
        - \_\_\_ Random
        - \_\_\_ Set time
        - \_\_\_ Surprise v. Heads Up
- ❖ October / January -
  - Start asking general questions to the entire staff through the weekly newsletter

I sent out surveys to 45 people and had a return of 14 responses.

- What are ways in the past that you have felt appreciated from Admin?
  - My admin has shown support to me as I teach two grade levels. He had made me feel welcomed to his school as I was at my previous school for 26 years. I feel very comfortable going to my admin for questions or concerns!
  - Treats in mailboxes, free jeans days, canceled meetings and given that time to work in our rooms or with team, free lunch for answering a question in the H2o,
  - Words, praise, notes
  - Small tokens, being recognized in H20, group outings, thanked in person.
  - I have felt appreciated when my admin has gone out of their way to give me positive feedback or to let me know that they want me working in their school.
  - whole group and individual rewards
  - Daily greetings, surprise snacks that are in our mailboxes.
  - Breakfast
  - Free Jeans Day
  - I have enjoyed receiving specific praises face to face. Honestly, just seeing admin displaying a positive attitude goes a long way! A simple smile, thumbs up, or head nod says, "We got this!"
  - Free jeans, surprise snacks
  - Several times, Greg is always doing something for staff, whether it is notes through email, candy in mailboxes, etc.
  - Random e-mails of appreciation. Random surprises in our mailbox or treats to pick up in office.
  - Recognition in h20, verbal or written praise

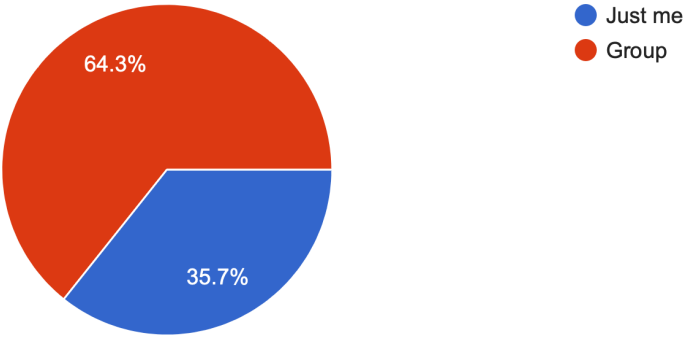
Was the last appreciation random or connected to an event or time of year?

14 responses



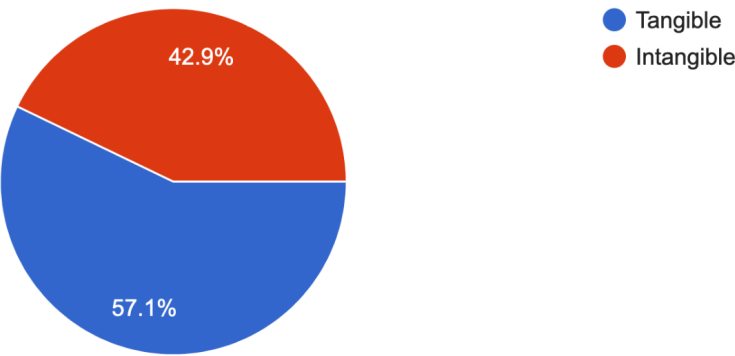
Was the last appreciation just for you or a group?

14 responses



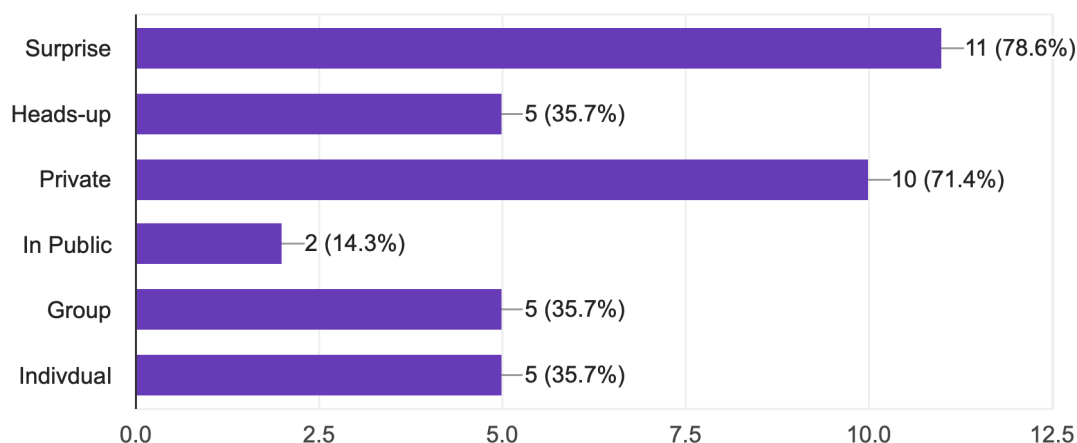
Tangible v Intangible which is better?

14 responses



## How would you like to be appreciated in the future Random / Set time / Surprise / Heads Up

14 responses



### Any additional suggestions or thoughts on staff appreciation?

- It's very nice to hear that I'm doing a great job in my efforts in these challenging times. I support my admin as he supports me!! I knew I would enjoy working at the great school that my admin is in charge of!
- My thoughts...keep doing it! We like to feel appreciated.
- I think our admin does a great job appreciating and knowing when to appreciate staff for their hard work and efforts.
- little things always add up over time, so I think doing small things periodically over the year is a good idea
- I feel appreciated by Greg. The fact that he makes sure he does rounds everyday to all of the classrooms to say good morning is appreciated!
- I think it is important for administrators to make it a point to praise different staff members each week. Using a "Praise Tall Sheet" could even be helpful. I really feel that telling someone face to face makes it more meaningful than an email, or anything else digital. Writing is fine if it's actually handwritten and personalized. Praise can be specific and to the point and approximately take two minutes. "Mrs. Bradshaw, I liked your input in yesterday's PBIS meeting. Have a great day!"
- It's just nice to feel appreciated every now and then especially with all this sickness going around.
- I have been in several school settings, and our current principal does the best by far with showing appreciation in a variety of ways.

### ❖ January / March -

- Begin using the information to adjust celebrations and acknowledgements with individual staff, groups and the entire staff.
  - The goal is to celebrate/acknowledge every staff member at least once individually in a manner they prefer and the entire staff at least twice in a manner suggested by data.
  - Here are some things I did December through March

- I had a church come in and do breakfast with tons of food
- I sent positive emails to staff - use dean, coaching team and counseling team to help with messages
- Jeans days
- Attempted to go hands off with staff meetings (fail on my part)
- Hot chocolate bar
- Gave 1:1 verbal praise as often as I could
- Donuts
- I scheduled a church to come in and do cookouts in the Spring
- I took the leadership team bowling - low attendance
- I offered the instructional team an outing with low engagements with responses
- Mailbox notes and treats
- Sent staff to lunch and covered them

❖ March -

➤ We will give the same questions to the staff and review the data.

- I sent out surveys to 45 people and had a return of 22 responses.

○ What are ways in the past that you have felt appreciated from Admin?

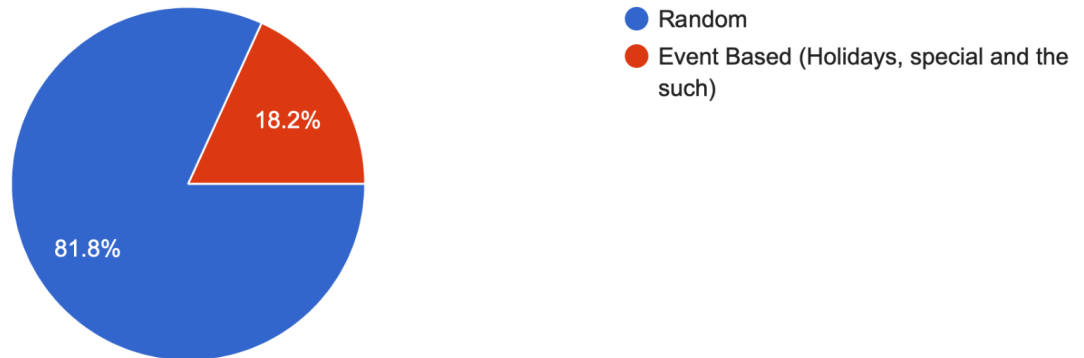
- Small tokens, emails, notes
- The admin asked for my participation in a professional discussion. After a walk through from admin; an email was sent to give positive feedback. Random acts of kindness such as free jeans, surprises in the mailbox!
- Fun treats, free jeans, random way to go's
- snacks and drinks
- Shout outs, celebration emails, mail box gifts, other teachers telling me I was talked highly of
- Many compliments
- Jeans days, treats in mail box, nice notes.
- I feel appreciated with the short conversations or emails. I like the simple, "You are doing great work. Keep it up," comments.
- Random acts of kindness, gifts, verbal praise of appreciation
- Free lunch or supplies
- Verbal acknowledgment, treats, compassionate responses
- When admin takes an interest in my personal life, sends a kind text or e-mail that recognizes something I've done or something positive, when admin cancels a meeting or paperwork that has been found unnecessary.
- Free Jeans Day, compliments
- Getting breakfast and/or lunch
- Mentioning something in our weekly "H2)", getting a surprise coffee from a survey taken
- Treats, acknowledgments of great teaching style, given heads up on issues
- a passing "nice job with \_\_\_" or other informal acknowledgements of contribution or impact, jeans days (of course), spirit weeks, random gifts in our mailboxes
- Treats in mailbox, free jeans days, shout outs in H2O



- visits
- Shout outs, surprise snacks, just saying thanks for something they noticed
- Appreciation lunches for staff and free jeans days
- Kind email, words of praise in passing, shout-out in the H20

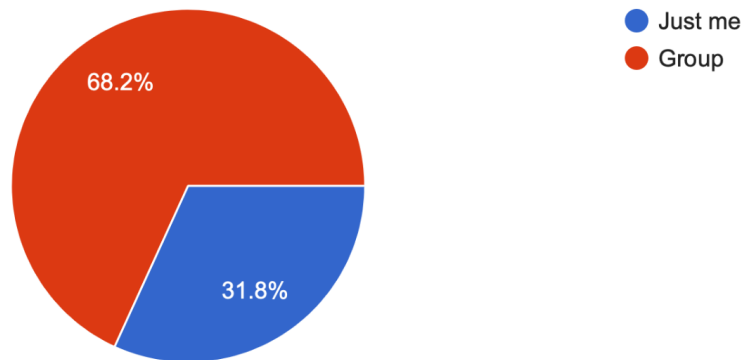
Was the last appreciation random or connected to an event or time of year?

22 responses



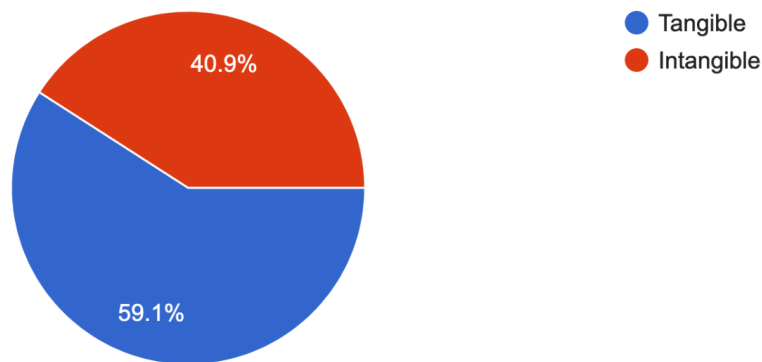
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22 responses



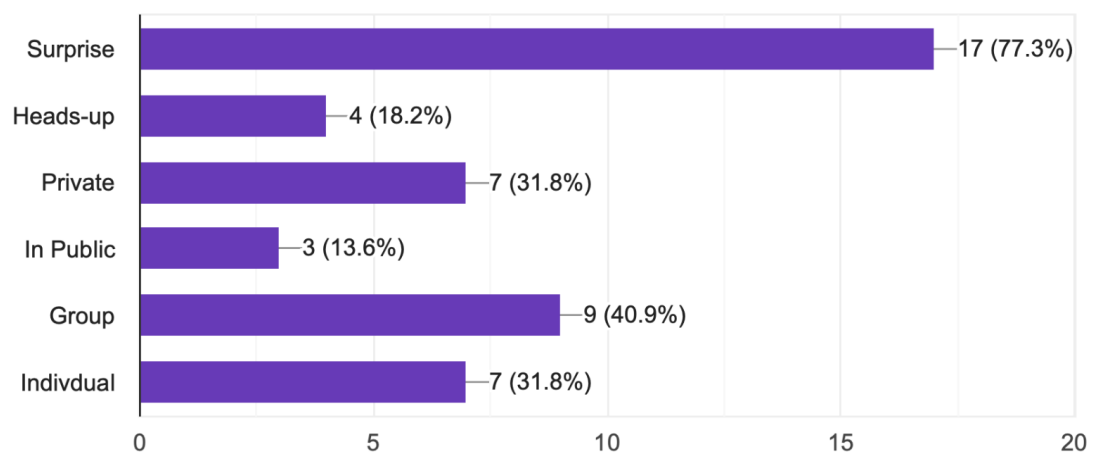
### Tangible v Intangible which is better?

22 responses



### How would you like to be appreciated in the future Random / Set time / Surprise / Heads Up

22 responses



- Any additional suggestions or thoughts on staff appreciation?
  - I do feel appreciated by our admin!
  - none at this time
  - Admin gives a staff member a break by taking over their class or duties for 15-30 minutes. This could be done quarterly or monthly by a random drawing.....
  - Just show staff that you know this job is not easy, but you recognize them showing up and giving it their all each and every day.
  - I love working here!
  - Our leaders do a great job showing appreciation.

- It feels good to get random gifts, those usually are on the days I need it the most. You do a great job making your staff (in my opinion) feel appreciated.
- Hawk Spirit Wear
- My admin is very good about showing appreciation in varied ways.
- It's the little things that matter the most. It doesn't have to be a gift or candy. Noticing hard work or effort, taking time to have a positive conversation and interest in your staff's life goes a long way. A lot of times it's nice to hear recognition or appreciation in person instead of via text or email.
- Simply thank "you's" in an email for noticing something we did well is nice.
- Continue to inspire staff
- I appreciate the intentional, specific feedback given! I don't need treats or surprises (though they are nice! And appreciated!!!). I just like specific, thoughtful praise/feedback from my boss! It's nice to feel seen and to have acknowledgement that you see and know that I do a lot of work behind the scenes. Just that acknowledgement means a lot. Ps-thanks for all you do. #appreciateyou

### **Data Analysis and Next Steps:**

After reviewing the data from each survey, there is clear evidence that I am on the right path with acknowledging staff. It is also clear that there is room for growth. I noticed that the majority of staff enjoy the tangible items that are often placed in their mailboxes. From time to time, I see the little phrases or quotes that I add with tangible praise posted in classrooms. While tangible appreciation was the majority, the desire to speak with me or actually hear from me more was repeated in a variety of ways. In each of these responses, staff wanted to see me and talk with me in various ways. Some responses wanted a little small talk about life outside school while others wanted me to tell them what they are doing well. I believe this is linked to how much staff enjoy me walking the building to say "good morning." These types of touchpoints could create another intentional method to build and support a strong building culture.

I learned a great deal from my teacher leaders about reciprocity. Our conversation was born of this statement, "I am not even sure if folks like what I am doing to appreciate them." I explained that I really don't need thanks or returned gifts, but some type of response helps me know if my most recent approach and timing were well received. Both leaders went on very quickly to share some background. They noted that staff typically tell each other, "there's something in your mailbox" as one of the more quiet feedback that I miss. They also let me know that sometimes silence is affirmation. As I begin to reflect, these two teacher leaders along with others share positive feedback that I have come to accept quickly just like some teachers do with me. These comments continue to be extremely helpful in various areas of staff feedback.

I took some time to compare and reflect on Hawthorne's overall response rate to surveys and it was unfortunate. Surveys given by the township, myself or other teachers have a 50% or higher rate when the responses are mandated and tracked. Surveys are not new and the digital survey has become an instrumental and somewhat overused way to collect certain data sets. Because data has to drive decision making, I need to find ways to support the collection of accurate and timely data focused on students and staff alike.

I have included a few actions I can take to continue to grow and support my staff. The ultimate goal is to keep making praise a greater part of our school culture. The follow actions will be extremely important to reaching that goal:

- Keep putting in the effort to praise, acknowledge and celebrate.
- Keep finding the best places to put in effort.
- Move from quantity to quality.
- Get the dean more involved.

- Get teachers more involved in these efforts.
- Improve the perception and relevance of data focused around staff.