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Title: Leading with Intention: How Protected Work Time Enhances School Leadership

Action Research Abstract

As a CTE high school principal, the constant demands of leadership can create a reactive work environment, making it difficult to focus on high-impact initiatives. This action research explores the benefits of implementing structured, non-negotiable work time to enhance decision-making, increase productivity, and reduce stress.

Through data collection on work patterns, interruptions, and leadership effectiveness, this study examines how protected time fosters strategic thinking and provides a sense of control in an unpredictable role. Findings highlight the psychological and professional benefits of intentional scheduling, demonstrating how school leaders can reclaim their time without sacrificing accessibility.

Attendees will leave with practical strategies for implementing and defending protected work time, allowing them to lead with greater clarity, balance, and purpose. Join this session to learn how intentional time management can transform your leadership and create a more focused, high-performing school culture.



Leading with Intention: How Protected Work Time Enhances School Leadership

Background Leading to Inquiry



As a CTE high school principal, the constant demands of leadership can create a reactive work environment, making it difficult to focus on high-impact initiatives. This action research explores the benefits of implementing structured, non-negotiable work time to enhance decision-making, increase productivity, and reduce stress.

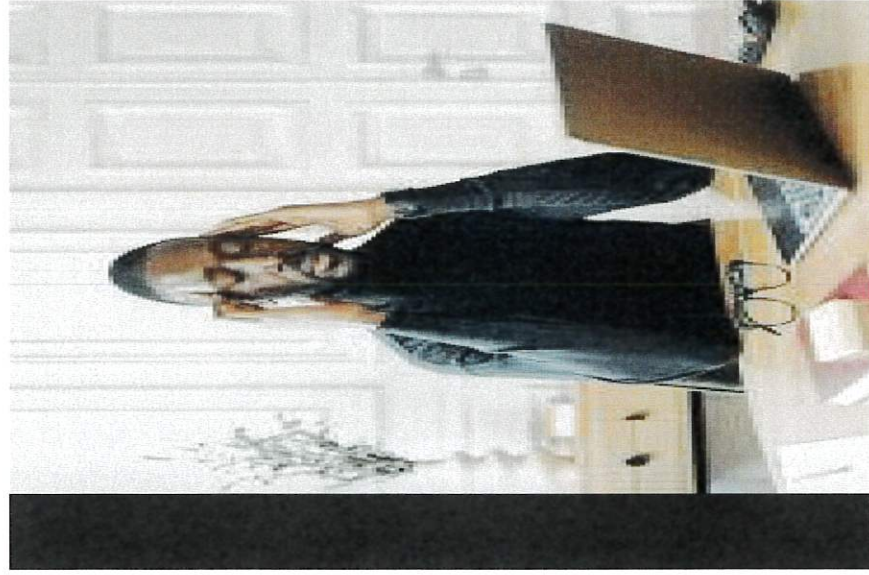


Purpose of Inquiry



Being a phase thinker and base harmonizer means I approach challenges methodically while striving to maintain balance and consistency in my work environment. When I consider carving out non-negotiable work time each week, I recognize that it aligns with both my professional goals and psychological needs. Structured, protected time fosters clarity and allows me to focus on high-priority tasks without distraction. It meets my psychological needs for control and predictability in a demanding role while reducing the stress that arises from constant interruptions.





My Wondering

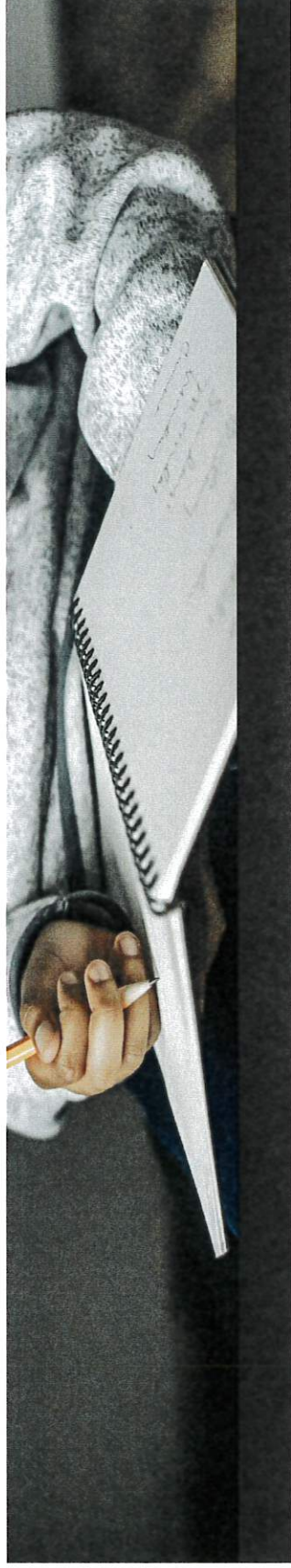
I wonder if I carve out
non-negotiable work time each
week if it meets my psychological
needs positively.



My Actions



- Prioritize (Identify the most critical tasks for the week.)
- Schedule Time (Block out non-negotiable time on my calendar.)
- Communicate & Set Boundaries (Inform my team and staff about these blocked times.)
- Create Environment (Use a space free of distractions.)
- Reflect & Adjust (At the end of each week evaluate the effectiveness of my non-negotiable work time.)

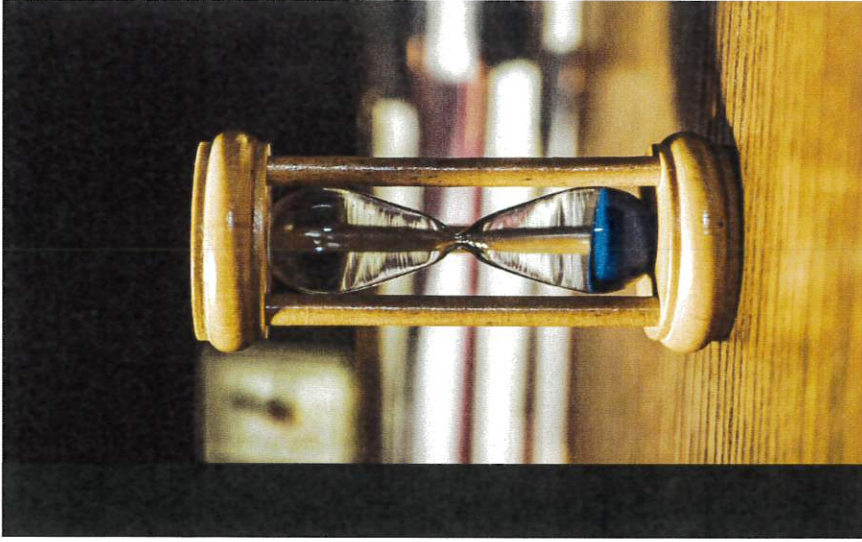


Data Collection

Create a Google Form to track my data weekly based on the following:

- What was my stress level before the time?
- How was my non-negotiable time utilized?
- What tasks were completed?
- Was I interrupted during this time?
- What was my stress level after the time?
- Did I do any school related work on Sunday?
- What is my level of guilt for not doing any schoolwork on Sunday?
- What is my stress level on Sunday heading into the work week?



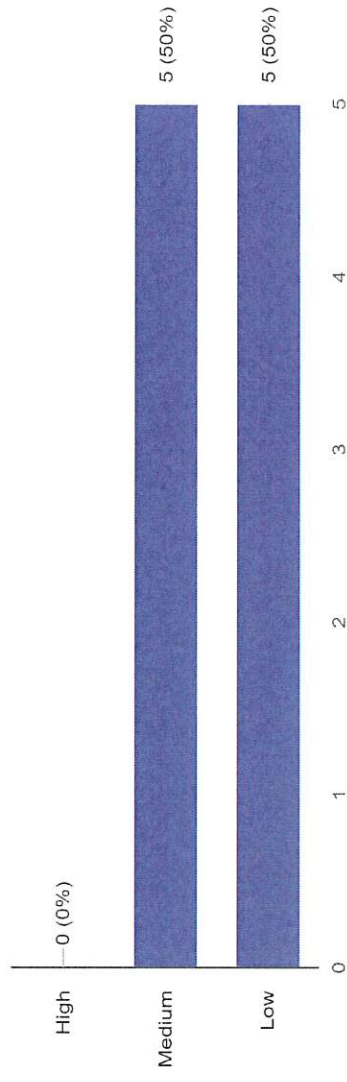


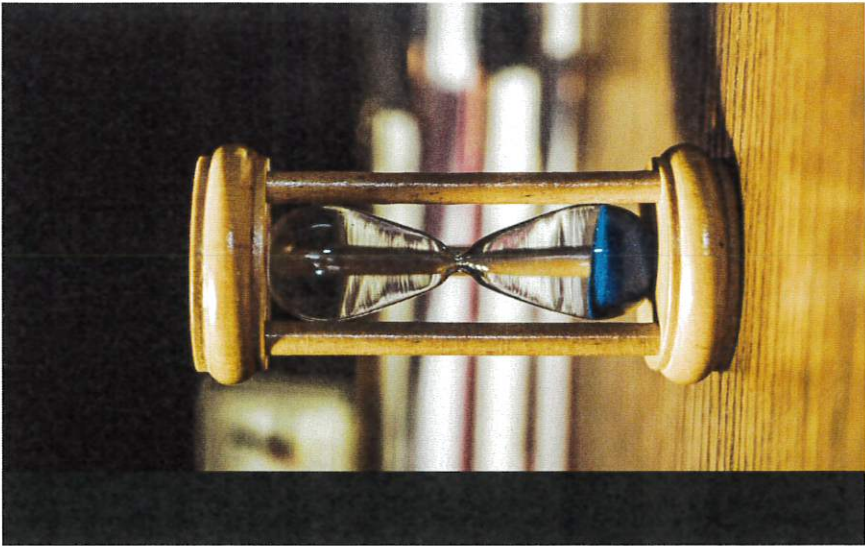
My Data

Fridays: 1:00pm – 2:00pm

January – March (10 Weeks)

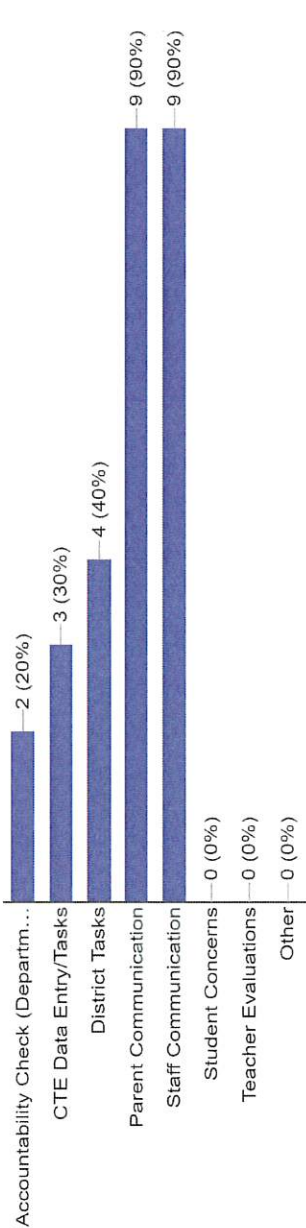
What was my stress level before the time?
10 responses





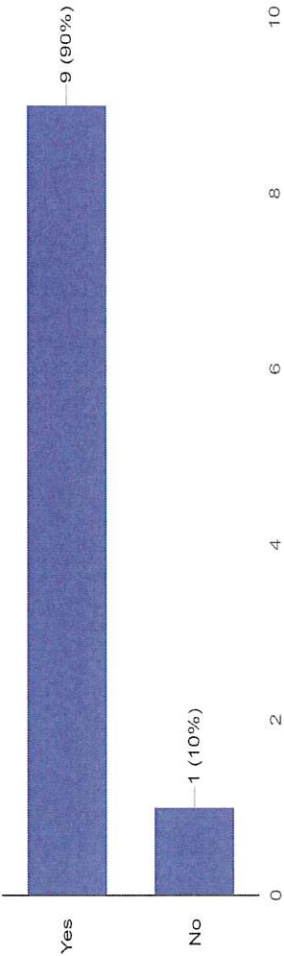
How was my non-negotiable time utilized?

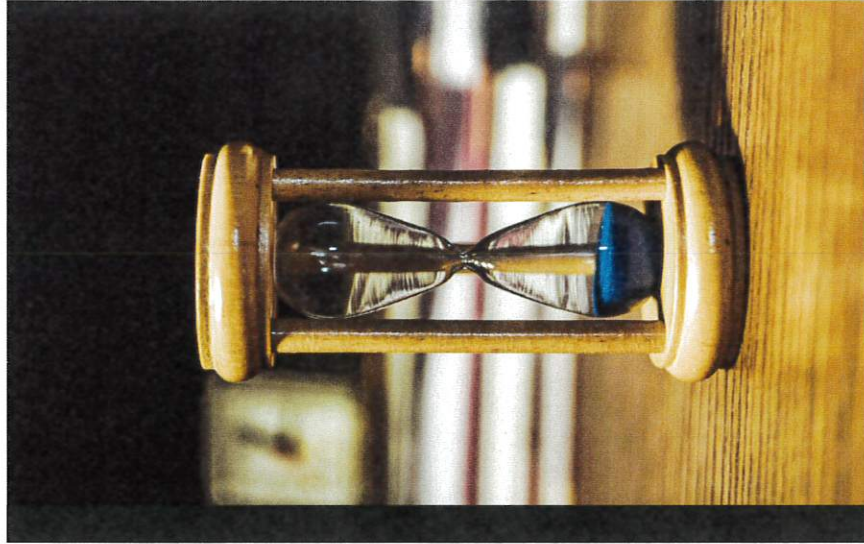
10 responses



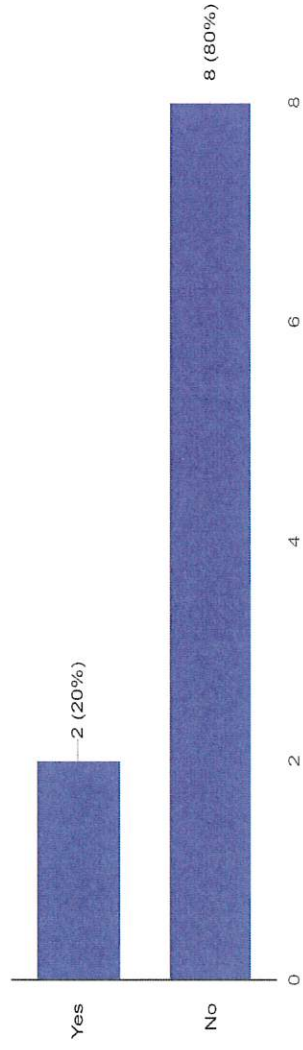
Did any tasks get completed during this time?

10 responses

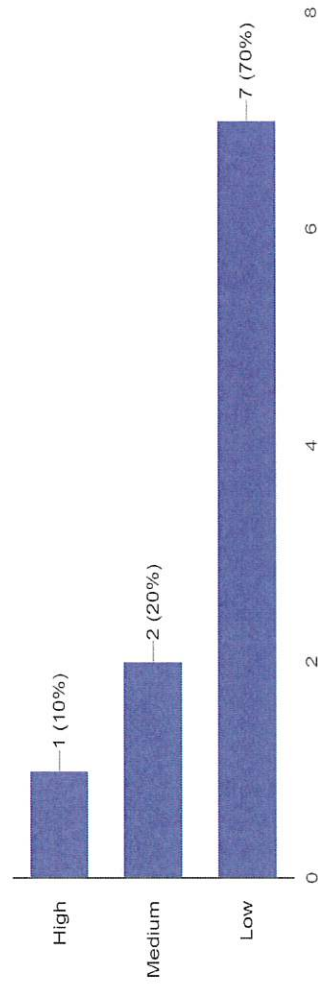


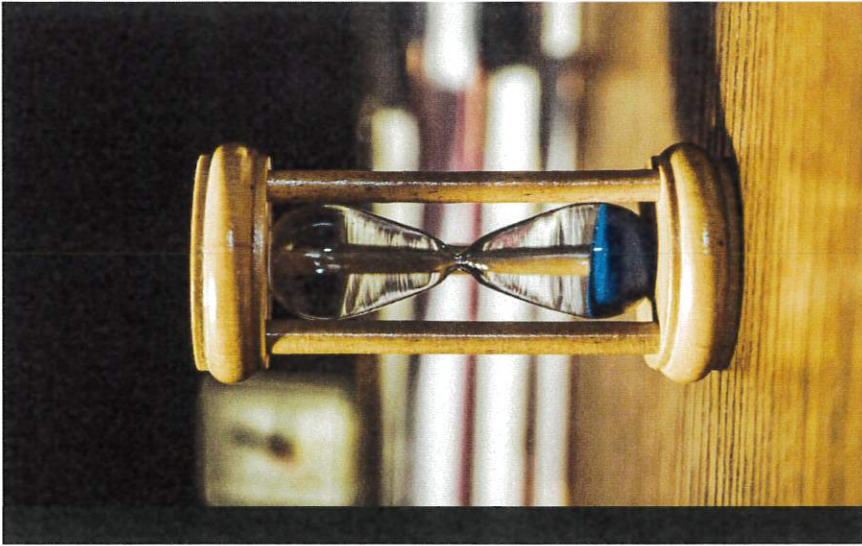


Was I interrupted during this time?
10 responses

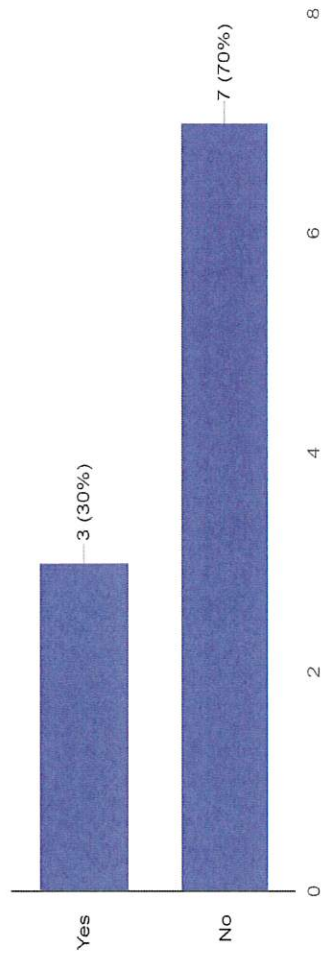


What was my stress level after this time?
10 responses

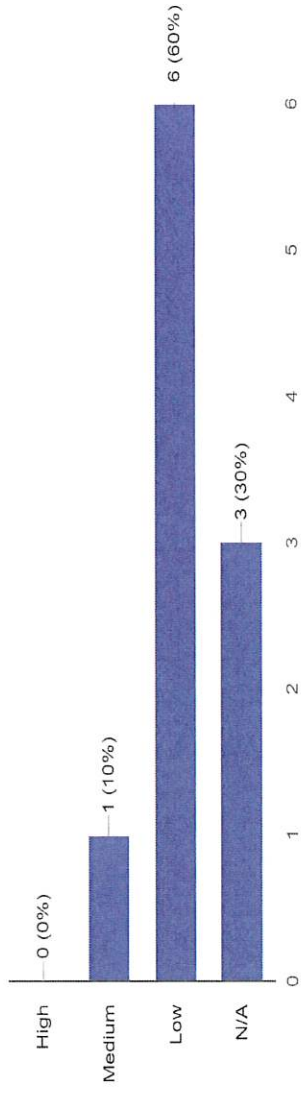


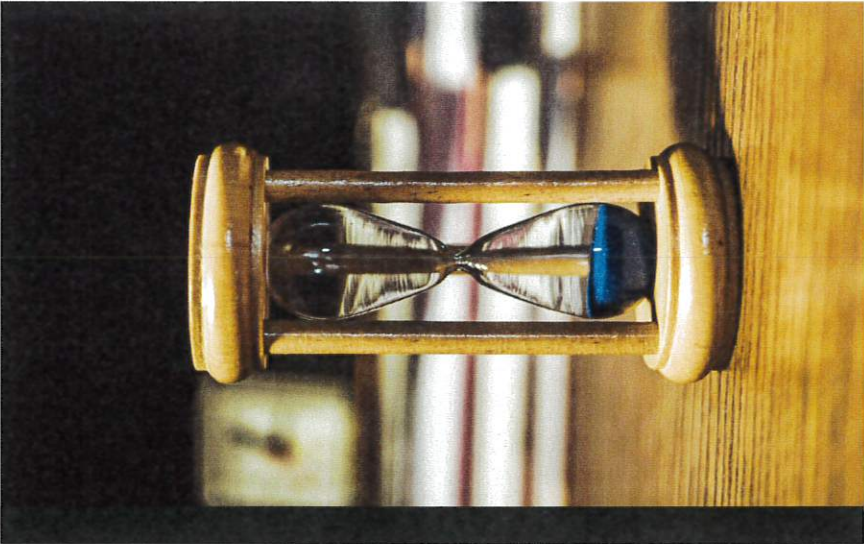


Did I do any school related work on Sunday?
10 responses



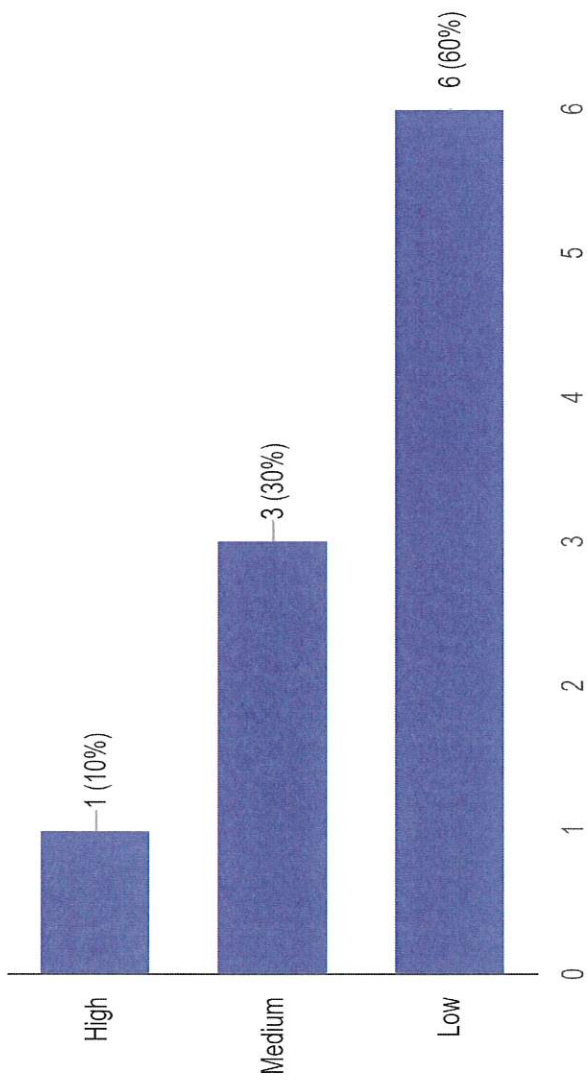
If no, what is level of guilt for not doing any school work on Sunday?
10 responses





What is my stress level on Sunday heading into the work week?

10 responses



My Discoveries

- **Increased Task Completion and Productivity**
Having uninterrupted blocks of time allowed for deep focus and task execution, especially on high-priority and strategic initiatives. The structured time provided the capacity to complete important school-related work more efficiently, without the reactive pace driven by daily interruptions.
- **Reduced Stress Levels**
Knowing that I had pre-scheduled, protected time gave me greater control over my workload. This predictability significantly lowered stress and created space for proactive leadership rather than reactive management.



- **Alignment with Personal Strengths**

As a phase thinker and base harmonizer, I thrive in environments that emphasize order, consistency, and measured progress. Protected work time provided the structure necessary to function at my best, reinforcing a sense of internal balance and stability amidst the often-dynamic nature of school leadership.

- **Enhanced Decision-Making and Strategic Clarity**

By stepping out of the daily operational whirlwind, I created mental space to think more clearly, reflect on goals, and align decisions with long-term priorities for my building and students.

- **Modeling Balance and Intentional Leadership**

My approach modeled for staff the value of setting boundaries and prioritizing wellness—both essential for sustaining effective leadership and cultivating a healthy school culture.



Where am I Heading Next

will expand this initiative by adding an additional hour of uninterrupted time each week, bringing my total protected time to two hours weekly. This second hour will be used strategically:

- One block will focus on instructional leadership (data analysis, planning PD, observing trends).
- The other will support operational and strategic planning (master scheduling, building goals, partnerships, etc.).

by continuing to treat this time as sacred—blocking it off the calendar, communicating it to staff, and resisting interruptions—I aim to model sustainable leadership while deepening my impact in both instruction and operations.

