



## **Finding the Balance: My Journey of Self Care and Positive Impact on Instructional Leadership**

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**School Name:** Montezuma Elementary School

**Principal's Email Contact:** Taylorm@swparke.k12.in.us

### **Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 2)**

As an administrator, I realize my best-laid plans, which include instructional tasks, are often pushed to the side with daily, urgent interruptions. With less control over my daily schedule and an increase in the number of tasks related to my position as a building Principal, including a longer day with supervision and evening duties, my work-life balance is out of sync, and my opportunities for self-care have declined.

Although I am working harder and working longer hours, I am feeling less energetic and inspired regarding the activities of my position. I have concerns about the impact of my instructional leadership and the satisfaction of my family life outside of work.

### **The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 3)**

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to determine the beneficial impact a better work/life balance would have for me and for my organization.

- Will I feel more energetic?
- Will I feel more impactful as a building leader?
- Will I have more satisfaction in my personal life?

### **My Wondering (Slide 4)**

With this purpose, I wonder to what degree a better work/life balance, with opportunities for self care, will provide me with the necessary energy to be a more efficient and impactful Principal, related to the time and energy needed for instructional leadership activities.

Related to this, I wonder what organizational or time management strategy will be most effective for me so that I may optimize my hours during the school day to better focus on instructional leadership activities related to my position as a building Principal.

### **My Actions (Slide 5)**

To gain the best insights into my wondering, I:

- Began, with more intention, scheduling self-care and personal and family time. This occurred as a result of my Action Research Mini-Cycle, focused on Balancing Professional and Personal Life as a Principal.
- Next, I met with a Wellness Coach and during our monthly meetings, we discussed improving my nutrition through meal planning and eating better, exercising, getting the proper amount of sleep, and activities that help me better handle stress.
- Third, I researched work/life balance and time management literature, which included valuable articles shared by my IPLI mentor, audio CDs which I listened to on my commute to work, presentations including “The Balanced Administrator,” by Tim McRoberts, Associate Executive Director of IASP, and the books *The Engine 2 Diet*, by Rip Esselstyn, and *Atomic Habits*, by James Clear.
- Finally, I brainstormed the most impactful instructional leadership activities related to my position, realizing one that is most often pushed aside is visiting classrooms. Being in the classroom to conduct classroom walk-through observations and formal classroom observations is critical to my impact as a building leader.

### **Data Collection (Slide 6)**

Data to determine the degree of impact of a better work/life balance, providing me with the necessary energy needed for instructional leadership activities was collected from:

- Wellness for Life InBody Tracking Sheets
- Reflections from my Exercise/Personal Habits journal
- My calendar/journal which tracked formal Classroom Observations, Classroom Walk-through Observations, and instructional leadership activities of importance

### **My Data (Slides 7-9)**

Slide 7: Sample from Caloric App the Wellness Coach and I would analyze, along with the InBody Tracking Sheet. The data from this is somewhat personal, although I am proud to find that the InBody Tracking Sheets indicate I lost 35 pounds over the course of this school year, and have increased my Skeletal Muscle Mass, while decreasing my percentage of Body Fat. This included a 5-pound weight loss during the month of December! An analysis of this sample week from the Calorie App indicates that while I am meeting my caloric intake goal to regulate my metabolism, most of my calories occur around dinner, and that I need to eat more earlier in the day, which is a change I made providing more energy throughout the day.

Slide 8: Table from the calendar and journal I used to track data from instructional leadership activities and classroom observations and classroom walk-through observations. My annual goal is complete formal observations before IREAD 3 and ILEARN testing begin. I rarely meet this, although having to make entries into the calendar and journal, instituting new time management strategies, along with meeting with my cohort to provide updates on my progress, held me accountable. Analysis of this indicates there are weeks when I missed the bar—the Secretary/Treasurer was out the week of January 20 with a death in her family, during the weeks of February 3 & 10, we had three eLearning days, and the week of March 9, I was sick for three days.

Slide 9:

Excerpts from the Reflective Journal I kept to help track my self care activities. I struggled with this at times, which is why this inquiry and action research was, and is, important to me. Analyzing these reflections showed me that I placed a priority on spending time with my family or attending my kids' events over self care activities, with exercising the least likely of the activities I chose. I could be recharged and renewed from spending time with my kids, and by losing weight I had more energy, but I also need to incorporate exercise more often and consistently.

### **My Discoveries (Slides 10-13)**

Slide 10: My discoveries include:

- I am at my best, and feel most energetic, having the most impact in my professional life, when I intentionally carve out time for my family and personal life.
- Having others to be accountable to is a motivator for me, both professionally and personally. When I am aware that I will meet face to face and analyze my data, I am the most likely to stay on course and follow through.

- Two new time management and organizational strategies that have helped me better optimize my hours during the school day.

Slide 11: Learning Statement One:

I am at my best, and feel most energetic, having the most impact in my professional life, when I intentionally carve out time for my family and personal life.

- This discovery is more qualitative than quantitative. I felt more energetic, and thus more productive, when I was intentional about my self care and time with my family. Analysis of my InBody Tracking Sheets indicates I continued to lose weight in December-February (12 pounds during this time). My classroom observation data indicates that during this time, I completed 19 formal observations and over 60 classroom walk-through observations.

Slide 12: Learning Statement Two:

Having others to be accountable to is a motivator for me, both professionally and personally. When I am aware that I will meet face to face and analyze my data, I am the most likely to stay on course and follow through.

- During monthly meetings with my Wellness Coach, we reviewed the information from the Caloric App and the InBody Tracking Sheet. Analysis of this led me to research nutritional information she provided, along with *The Engine 2 Diet*. During this time we discussed self care activities including meal planning, strategies for exercising at home and at work, sleeping, and activities to better handle stress. I met with the Wellness Coach on December 4, January 8, February 19 and March 5. With each meeting we would discuss weight loss goals for the next meeting.
- IPLI Seminar and Regional Cohort meetings took place monthly, November 25, January 29, February 4 and March 3, and were accompanied by check-ins with my Mentor via email in between meetings. During this time period, I continued to make progress with classroom observations, visiting classrooms at a pace to complete formal observations before the state assessment season in the spring.

Slide 13: Learning Statement Three:

Two new time management and organizational strategies that have helped me better optimize my hours during the school day.

- During his presentation "The Balanced Administrator," Tim McRoberts, Associate Executive Director of IASP, shared an organizational strategy which was helpful: labeled file folders for each day of a month, and labeled folders for each month of the year.

Items with deadlines were placed in that date's folder. Each day, I have a folder of items to complete, and if they are not completed, I place them in the next day's folder.

- In *A Principal's Guide to Work-Life Balance*, Principal Bill Zimmer shares another organizational strategy that I found helpful: To-do lists are kept on post-it notes within a manila folder, with different colors representing their importance. Immediate tasks are on the left side of the folder, and longer-term tasks are placed on the right. This folder goes in my daily folder.

Both organizational strategies include the benefit of keeping tasks and data in front of me, which is something I have found essential for staying on task and enhancing my productivity.

### **Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 14)**

To continue to build upon my progress personally and professionally:

- I will continue to be deliberate and intentional in scheduling time for me and for my prioritized instructional activities. Exercise and self care need to be scheduled in the morning before my schedule gets away from me. My highest priority activities, classroom observations, will continue to be scheduled at the beginning of the day to provide the best opportunity for completion.
- I will find methods to continue to hold myself accountable by keeping data in front of me and by meeting with an accountability group—other administrators from my school corporation, and from my regional cohort.

### **Bibliography (Slide 15)**

- Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.
- Esselstyn, R. (2017). *The Engine 2 Diet*. New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing.
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Montezuma Elementary School

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# Background Leading to this Inquiry

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# Purpose of This Inquiry

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to determine the beneficial impact a better work/life balance would have for me and for my organization.

- Will I feel more energetic?
- Will I feel more impactful as a building leader?
- Will I have more satisfaction in in my personal life?



# My Wondering

With this purpose, I wonder to what degree a better work/life balance, with opportunities for self care, will provide me with the necessary energy to be a more efficient and impactful Principal, related to the time and energy needed for instructional leadership activities.

Related to this, I wonder what organizational or time management strategy will be most effective for me so that I may optimize my hours during the school day to better focus on instructional leadership activities related to my position as a building Principal.

# My Actions

To gain the best insights into my wondering, I:

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- Next, I met with a Wellness Coach and during our monthly meetings, we discussed improving my nutrition through meal planning and eating better, exercising, getting the proper amount of sleep, and activities that help me better handle stress.
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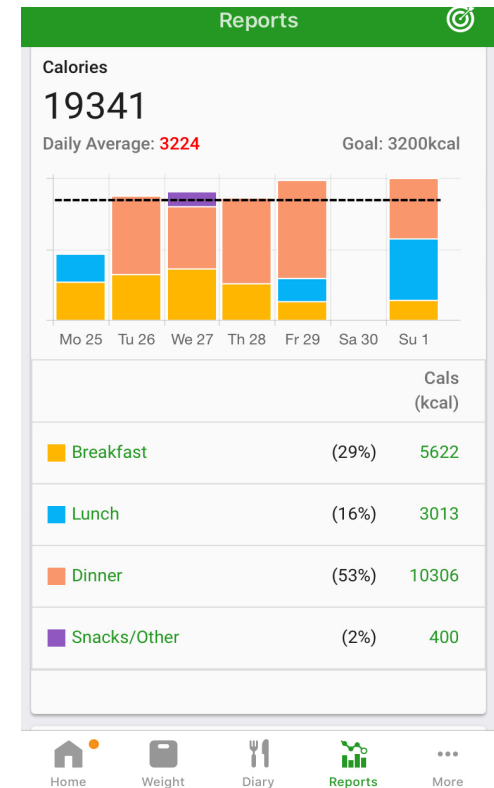
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# My Data

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	Formal Observations	Classroom Walk-through
Week of Dec. 2	5	5
Week of Dec. 9	6	8
Week of Dec. 16	0	4
Week of Jan. 6	3	10
Week of Jan. 13	3	5
Week of Jan. 20	0	10
Week of Jan. 27	2	9
Week of Feb. 3	2	7
Week of Feb. 10	2	5
Week of Feb. 17	3	12
Week of Feb. 24	3	8
Week of Mar. 2	2	10
Week of Mar. 9	0	0
Week of Mar. 16	Began eLearning for remainder of the school year	

# My Data

Excerpts from the Reflective Journal I kept to help track my self care activities. I struggled with this at times, which is why this inquiry and action research was, and is, important to me. Analyzing these reflections showed me that I placed a priority on spending time with my family or attending my kids' events over self care activities, with exercising the least likely of the activities I chose. I could be recharged and renewed from spending time with my kids, and by losing weight I had more energy, but I also need to incorporate exercise more often and consistently.

*Mini Golf with my son:*

*This was a spur of the moment activity, without much planning before this Saturday. After a busy week, my son asked about doing something together, just he and I. This was perfect because neither of us could be on our phone, and we spent one and a half hours just having fun. He is a middle schooler, and I felt excited that he wanted to spend some time just with Dad. This work/life balance is difficult for me. I felt great after this activity--refreshed and can see how getting away and not thinking about work, staying in the moment, can help approach school again with renewed energy.*

*Audio books on my commute:*

*This is a new activity for me--with a longer commute and some long car trips this past summer, I looked into audio books. There are several related to my favorite genre of reading, but also lots of non-fiction audiobooks which are interesting. I can listen to them driving to and from work and had a long trip to my daughter's cross country race. I definitely get tied up within the books and am able to leave work behind in my mind with this activity. At times something that occurred in this book would spark a thought about work or life, and I find I have to replay the chapter. Of the tasks I have selected, this is the easiest to fit in and one I will continue to do. I am not sure why I have not discovered these earlier!*



# My Discoveries

My discoveries include:

- I am at my best, and feel most energetic, having the most impact in my professional life, when I intentionally carve out time for my family and personal life.
- Having others to be accountable to is a motivator for me, both professionally and personally. When I am aware that I will meet face to face and analyze my data, I am the most likely to stay on course and follow through.
- Two new time management and organizational strategies which have helped me better optimize my hours during the school day.

# My Discoveries

## Learning Statement One:

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- This discovery is more qualitative than quantitative. I felt more energetic, and thus more productive, when I was intentional about my self care and time with my family. Analysis of my InBody Tracking Sheets indicates I continued to lose weight in December-February (12 pounds during this time). My classroom observation data indicates that during this time, I completed 19 formal observations and over 60 classroom walk-through observations.



# My Discoveries

## Learning Statement Two:

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# My Discoveries

## Learning Statement Three:

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