

HOW DOES CLEARLY COMMUNICATING MY LEADERSHIP VISION BUILD CAPACITY
WITHIN MYSELF AND THOSE WITH WHOM I LEAD?

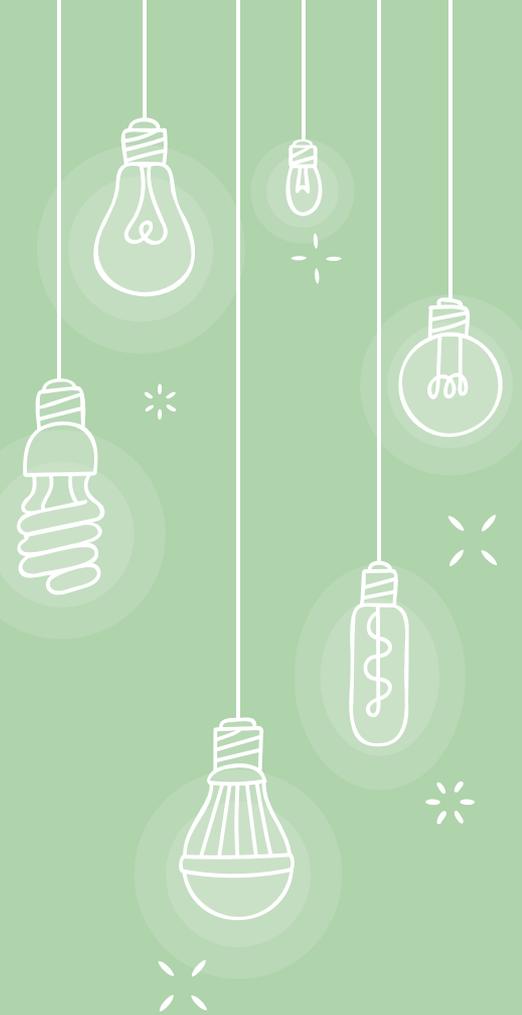


SPRING MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Principal: Kellée Merritt

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Action Research Project
(Cohort 9)



✧ BACKGROUND LEADING TO THIS INQUIRY

- ❏ District Vision Statement for Teaching and Learning
- ❏ Formulation of New Leadership Team
- ❏ School Data & Analysis of District Assessments



PURPOSE OF MY INQUIRY

COMMUNICATING MY WHY?



“

ACHIEVING
YOUR GOALS
BECOMES
MUCH EASIER
WHEN
YOU KNOW WHY
YOU WANT
TO ACHIEVE THEM.

@IMPERFECTMANIFESTOR



* HAVE I CLEARLY COMMUNICATED MY WHY?

- + I began my first year as principal at SMES 2020-2021 school year
- + I am the fourth principal since Spring Mill opened in 1959.
- + I began my first year with ambitious goals to positively impact academic performance and growth.
- + I realized through my Mini AR project this fall, that my vision may not be as crystal clear as I previously thought.

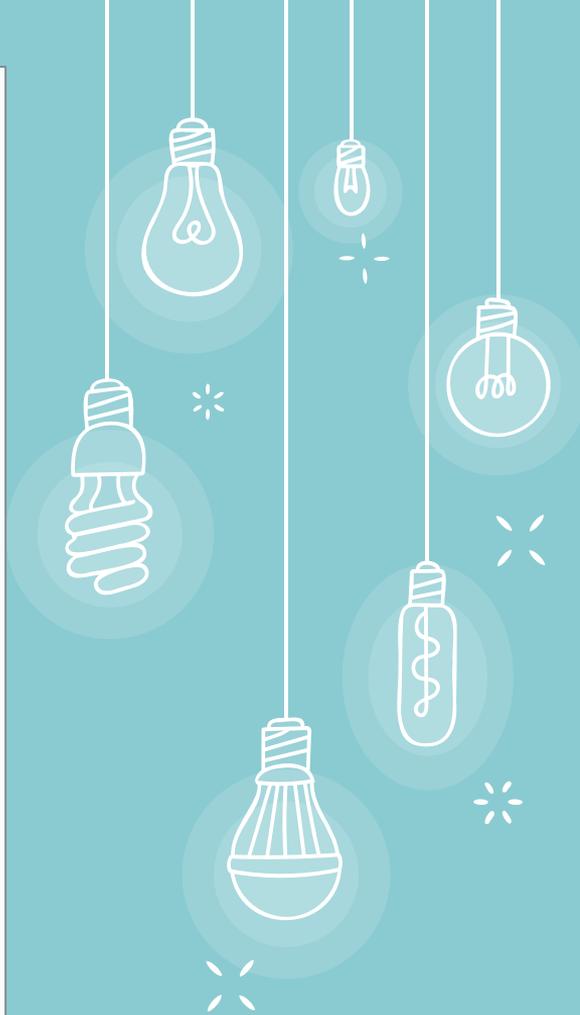
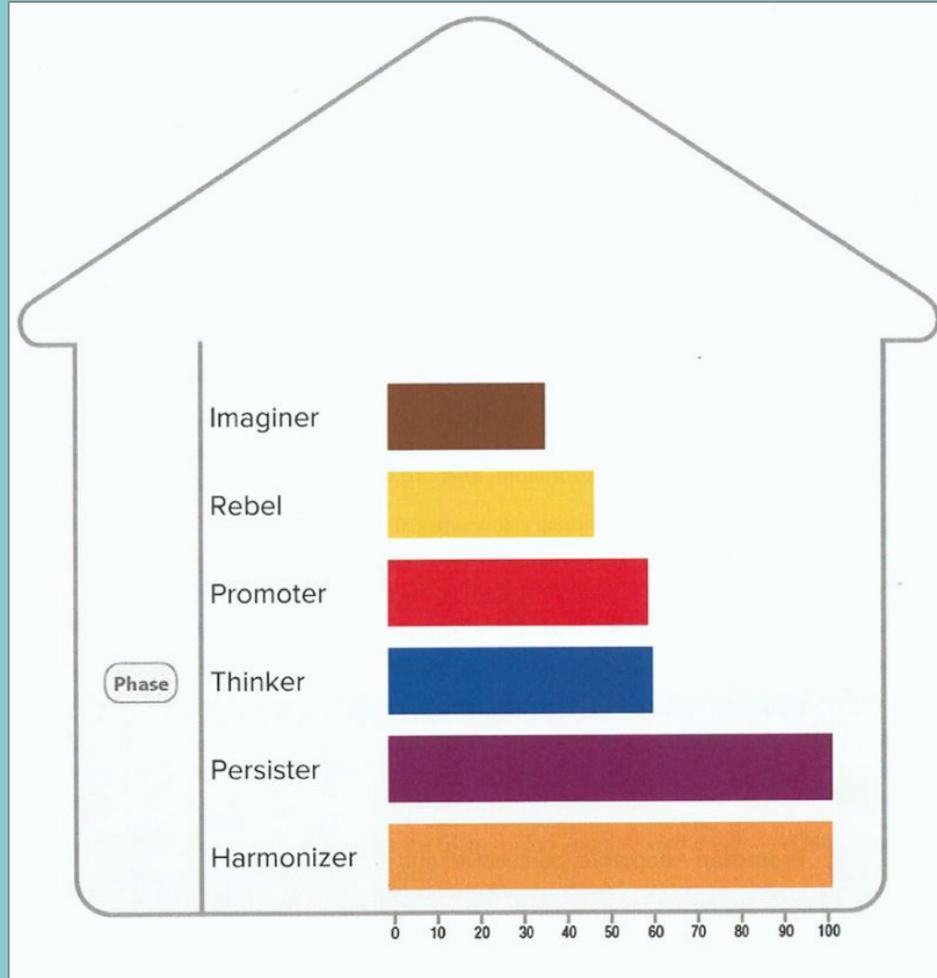




MY WONDERING

I began to ponder the reality that perhaps I was not creating an environment where those with whom I am tasked to lead could buy-in because I had not been clear about communicating my why. This led me to realize that if my vision was more clear and not ambiguous, it might be easier for teachers and teacher leaders to follow. Could it be that what I perceived as a lack of buy-in was actually emanating from a place where individuals have a desire to be on board with my vision for leadership. However, a prerequisite may be the need for clearer communication to the building level leadership team.

PROCESS COMMUNICATION MODEL (PCM)



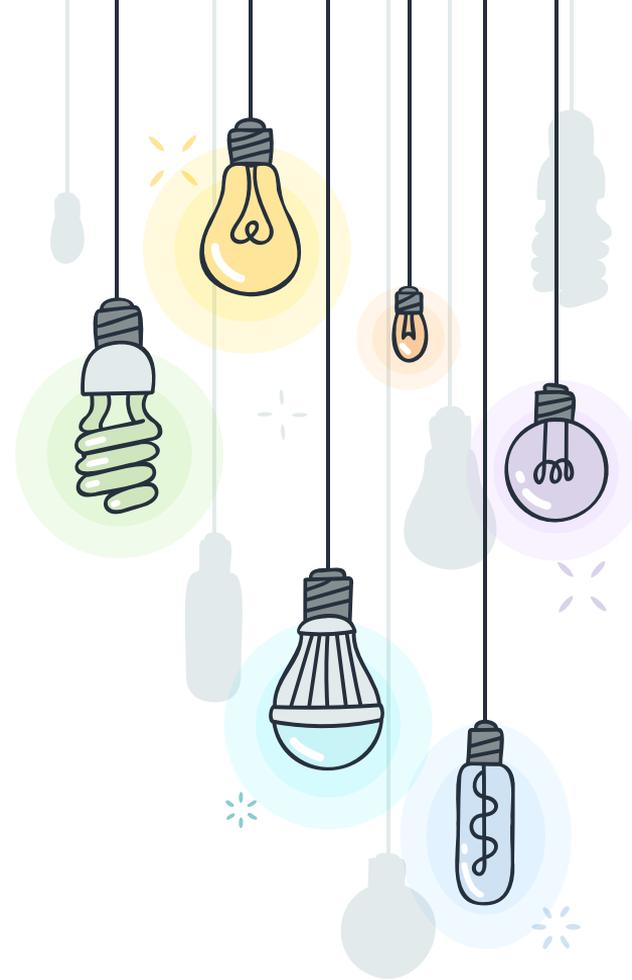
✧ MY PREFERRED LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION CURRENCY IS COMPASSION

Base Motivator-Harmonizer

Compassionate, Sensitive, Warm.
I am a leader who builds relationships. My gift is empathy and encouragement so people feel connected and valued.

Phase Motivator-Thinker

I thrive on achievement. I need to be productive and efficient. Planning and accomplishing tasks are intrinsically rewarding.

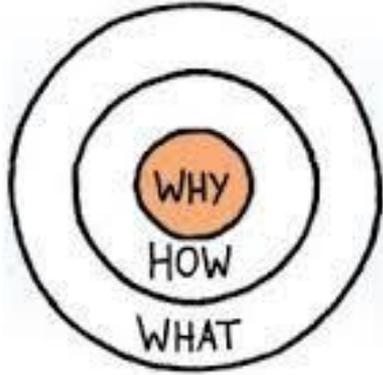


MY ACTIONS

- ❑ Reflect- Have I clearly defined my why?
- ❑ Redefine my leadership vision
- ❑ Communicating with the team



Act, Think & Communicate from the **INSIDE OUT!**



WHY - Your Purpose

Your motivation? What do you believe?

HOW - Your Process

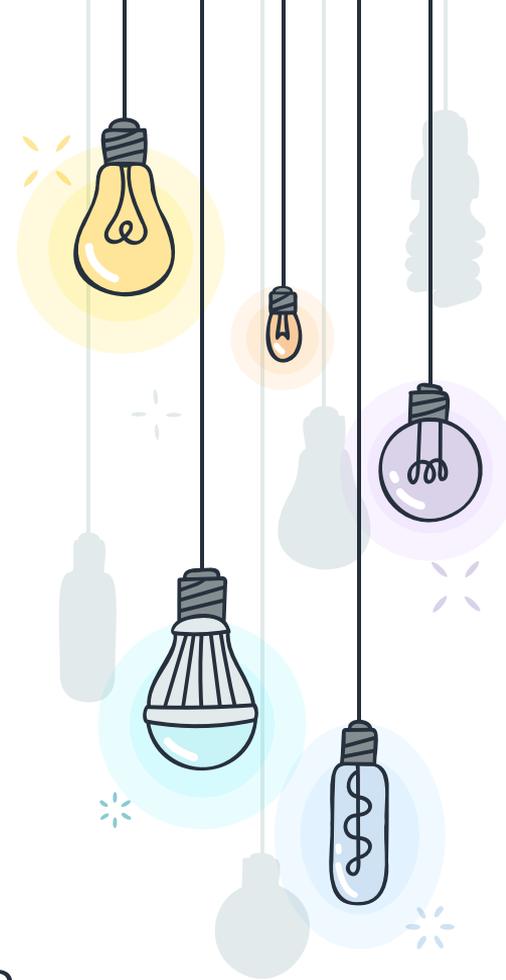
Specific actions taken to realize your Why

WHAT - Your Result

What do you do? The result of Why. Proof

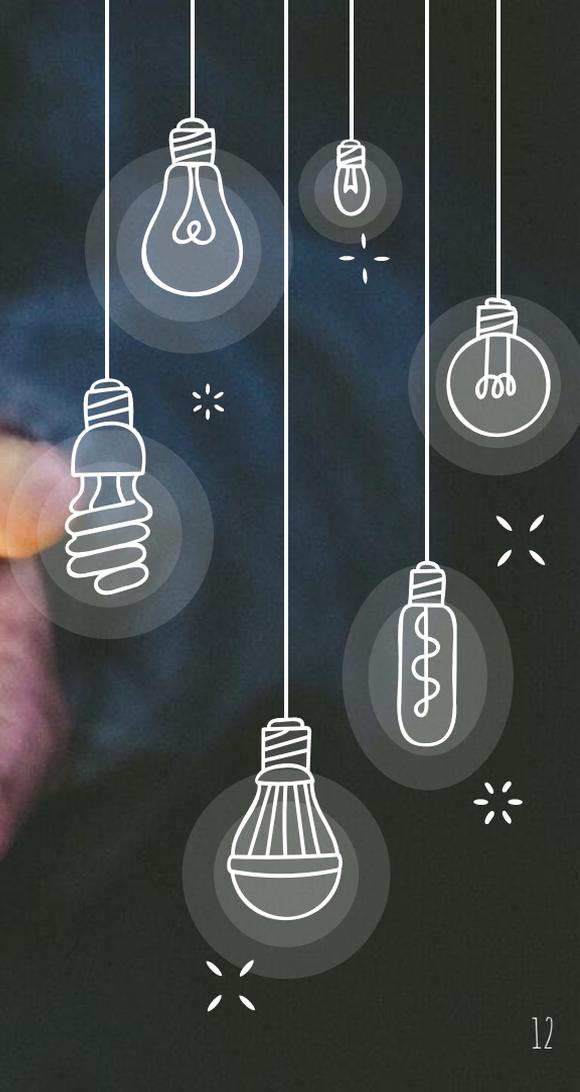
COMMUNICATING MY WHY

- ❑ Team Leader Meeting
- ❑ Leadership Meeting
- ❑ Building Experts Meeting - ENL, SPED, Coaches
- ❑ Front office staff - Secretaries, Nurse, Custodian, AP





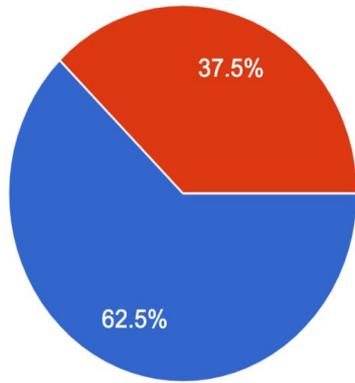
DATA COLLECTION



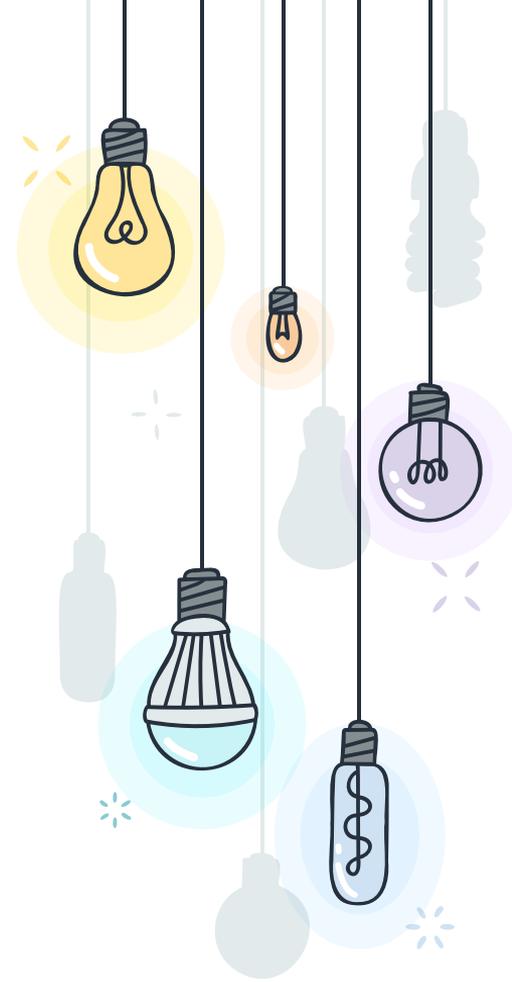
* ACTION RESEARCH DATA

Do you feel like you have a solid understanding of what Ms. Merritt's Vision is for SM?

16 responses



- Yes
- No



* BUILDING LEADERSHIP RESPONSES

Team Leaders

Teachers who are ready to show up everyday and do what is necessary for student growth. Someone who is all in and who can be professionally challenged to achieve higher expectations.

Ms. Merritt values intentional instruction and academic success. These goals will help grow our school community both academically and socially. She also highly values teachers who are fully committed to professional growth and strong classroom management.

Coaches

Quality, rigorous instruction leading to academic success for all students in a safe, respectful, caring environment.

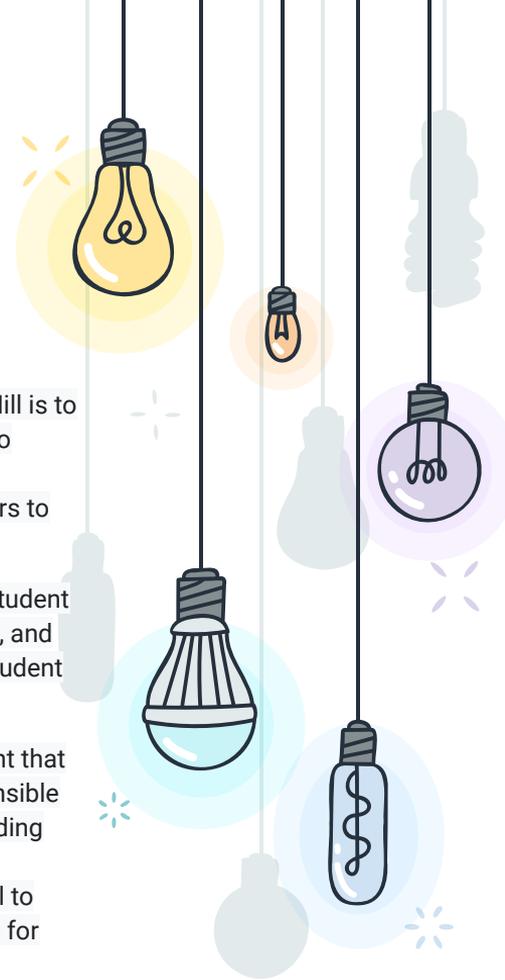
To provide a top-notch quality education for all of the students by holding teachers accountable for their own professional growth and be responsive to the needs of their students. Students are held accountable for their own learning by setting goals, reflecting on their progress, and being present every day. All stakeholders are encouraged to be part of the SM community.

ENL / SPED

Ms. Merritt's vision for Spring Mill is to have a collaborative approach to problem solving/advocating for students. She wants the teachers to feel well-supported.

Holding high expectations for student learning, data driven instruction, and equitable practices to ensure student success.

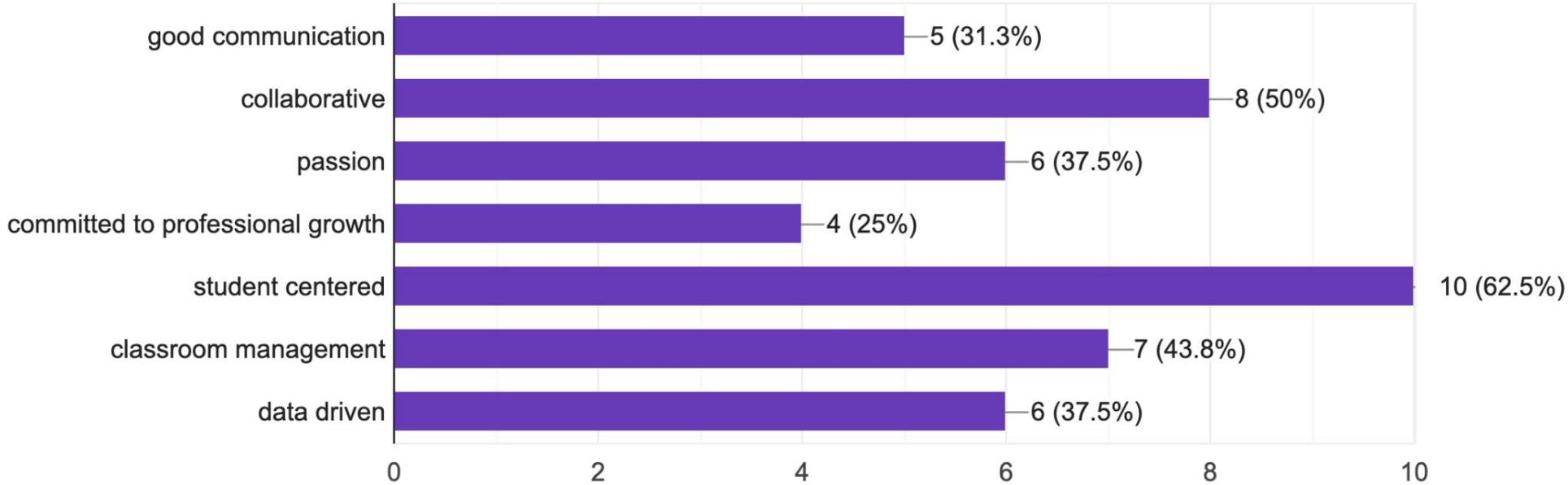
To create a learning environment that promotes students to be responsible and caring citizens. While providing instruction that is high-level but encourages opportunities for all to learn. As well as creating space for educators to continue to grow professionally.





Choose three of the most important qualities/characteristics of an effective teacher that are important to you

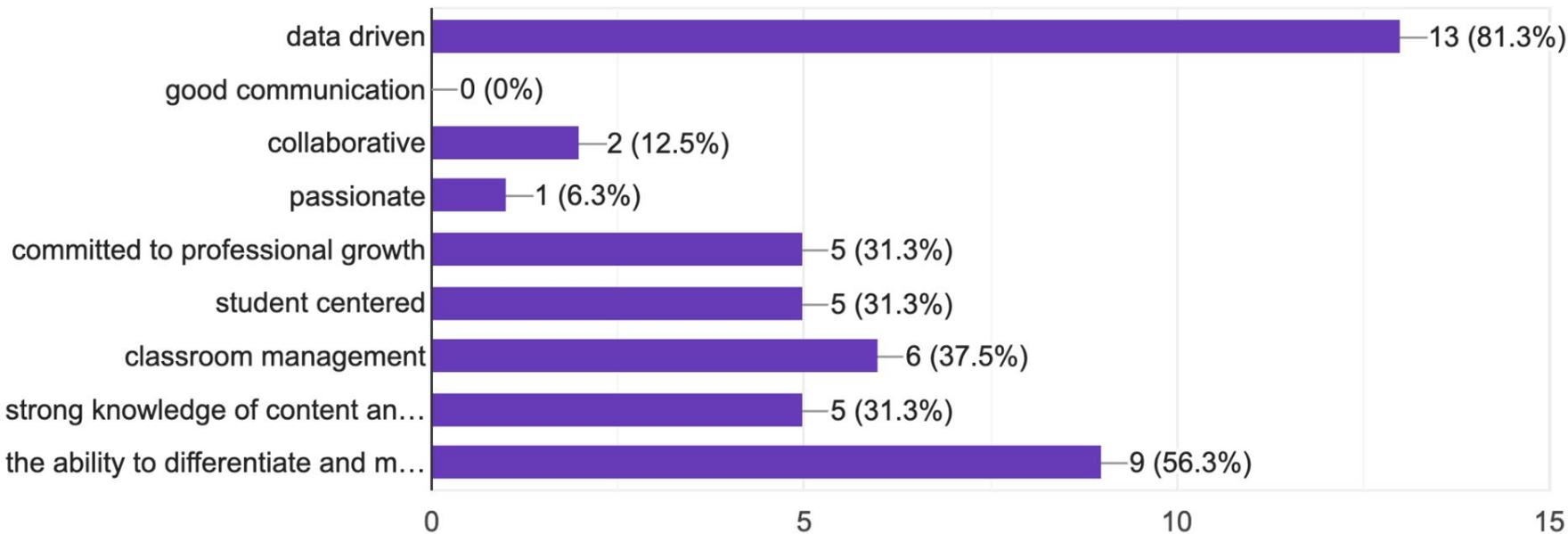
16 responses





Choose three of the most important qualities/characteristics of an effective teacher that are important to your administrator

16 responses



MY DISCOVERIES

- + Although 62.5% of the sixteen individuals of our building level leaders claim that they have a solid understanding of my vision, all statements regarding what they perceive the vision to be were accurate.
- + Building leaders feel strongly that the characteristics of an effective teacher according to my definition would be an individual who is data driven, differentiates to meet the needs of all students and also has the ability to effectively manage their classroom.



MY DISCOVERIES

- + Building Leaders would define the characteristics of an effective teacher as someone who is student centered, collaborative and has the ability to effectively manage their classroom.
- + My actions most likely indicate my vision based upon survey responses. However, have I ensured through clear communication that my building leaders understand my leadership vision.
- + Have a created opportunities for buy-in and ownership of the leadership vision to transition from **I** to **We**.
- + Taking a closer look at what building leaders have said they need to grow their leadership capacity is critical.
- + Finding opportunities to connect with building leaders using my personality skills as a harmonizer, might be a way to foster buy-in.



WHERE I AM HEADING NEXT

Share AR Data with Building Level Leadership.

1

Create a SM Staff Handbook to communicate expectations, school policies and procedures.

3

Create Goal Setting Meetings for Building Leaders to address the areas they have identified in need of support (Summer 2022).

5

Invite Staff to take the Action Research Survey. Compare and analyze results.

2

Begin defining what are the characteristics of an effective teacher with Building Leadership Team at SMES.

4

Align Professional Development opportunities to grow leadership capacity amongst key stakeholders.

6

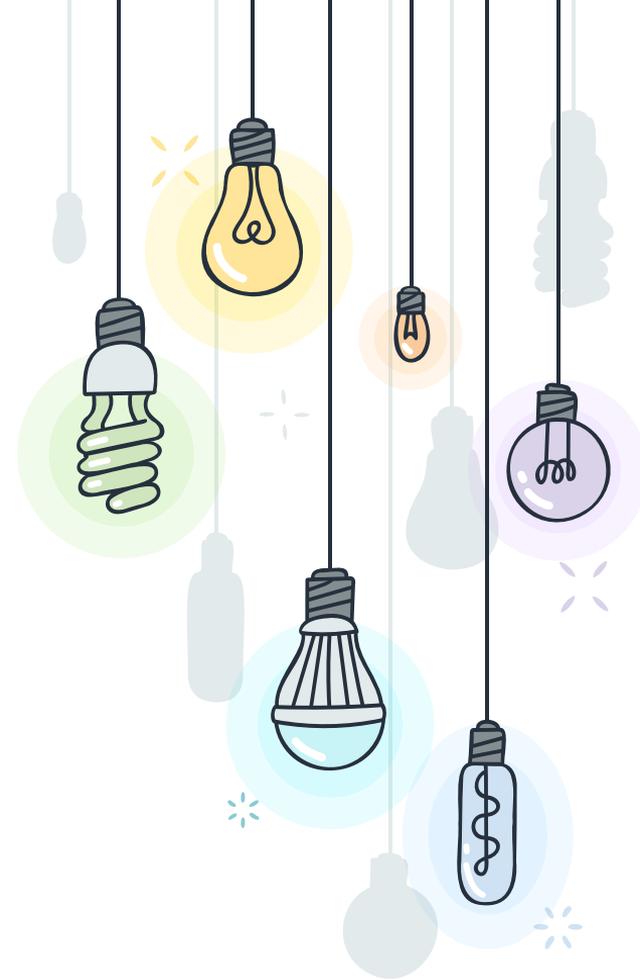
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How Does Clearly Communicating My Leadership Vision Build Capacity Within Myself and Those with Whom I Lead?

Principal Name: Kellée Merritt

School Name: Spring Mill Elementary

Principal's Email Contact: kmerritt@msdwt.k12.in.us

Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide 3)

Beginning my building level leadership during Covid-19 created unique challenges. Among those was the ability to connect in authentic ways that build the sense of shared ownership and tethering amongst a new administrative team. It has become apparent that in order to lead effectively, leadership opportunities must be created and leadership capacity nurtured amongst stakeholders.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 4 & 6)

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to ensure that I am being crystal clear in communicating my {My Why?} in order to build capacity within myself and members of my team.

My Wondering (Slide 7)

With this purpose, we wondered can we create a more shared leadership model at Spring Mill Elementary in an effort to increase buy-in while building capacity within key stakeholders to move this leadership vision and building forward.

My Actions (Slide 11& 12)

1. I began by taking time to reflect on my leadership vision. I also met with my assistant principal who joined me this past January after my previous assistant principal was promoted to another position within the district. We spent a Sunday afternoon writing down all of leadership goals and actions towards those goals.
2. I asked myself the question, "Have I clearly defined my why?"
3. I realized that I needed to redefine my leadership vision to include not only what I was working towards in the areas of academic performance and achievement and school climate, but also why.
4. I needed to articulate, both internally and externally, the intent behind this work identifying where I am currently in my Process Communication Leadership Profile (PCM).

5. Clearly communicating “My Why” needed to be shared with various leadership teams so that they have a comprehensive understanding of my vision.
 - a. Team Leads
 - b. Building Leadership Team (BLT)
 - c. Building Experts
 - d. Front Office staff

Data Collection (Slide 13)

A google form was created to elicit feedback. The first question was to ascertain do individuals feel like they have a solid understanding of what my vision is for Spring Mill Elementary.

My Data (Slide 14)

Individuals from the three groups represented were asked to write their perception of that vision using 2-3 sentences.

It was clear that across the three groups, responses were similar. Top-notch instruction, accountability for all stakeholders, and individuals that are committed to ensuring academic growth for their students as well as being agentive in their individual pursuit for professional growth; were listed as components of my vision.

My Data (Slide 15 & 16)

This data shows the comparison of what stakeholders view as the characteristics of an effective teacher vs. what they perceive I believe are the characteristics of an effective teacher.

My Discoveries (Slide 17& 18)

- **Learning Statement One:** My actions most likely indicate my vision based upon the Google form responses. However, have I ensured through clear communication that my building leaders understand my leadership vision.

Although 62.5% of the sixteen individuals of our building level leaders claim that they have a solid understanding of my vision, all statements regarding what they perceive the vision to be are accurate.

- **Learning Statement Two:** How can I be more intentional about creating opportunities for buy-in and ownership of the leadership vision in order to transition from **I** to **We**?

Stakeholders listed the top three characteristics of an effective teacher as the following:

- Student centered-62.5%
- Collaborative-50%
- Classroom management-43.8%

Stakeholders listed the top three characteristics of an effective teacher according to me as their building administrator as the following:

- Data Driven-81.3%
- The ability to differentiate and meet students’ needs-56.3%

- Classroom Management-37.5%
- **Learning Statement Three:** Finding opportunities to connect with building leaders using my personality style as a harmonizer, might be a way to create more buy-in.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 19)

I have learned that Spring Mill Elementary is ready to move forward with my leadership vision when they have a clear understanding of “My Why”? My teachers want to know their leader in a manner that requires vulnerability on my part, which increases their respect for me as their leader. It is not enough for me to have a vision and to follow up with actions that can be seen by those I lead. Shared ownership of that vision, which is what it will take in order to move this building forward, requires me to clearly communicate my why routinely.

I have also realized that the team that I serve, even though they have been somewhat complacent in what I had observed prior to coming on board, is eager to grow their individual leadership capacity. Perhaps, they have just been waiting for someone with whom they can foresee aligning with in order to accomplish their goals. We began the school year with the theme, All In-No Shame, No Blame, No Excuses. In my mind, this was a way to create buy-in. However, what I know now is that this type of investment from stakeholders, the willingness to truly be fully committed to the work can only happen when they are clear regarding what the work entails and why it is important to the individual attempting to forge the necessary change. Leaders must be explicit regarding their why because for many stakeholders that level of communication fosters shared ownership in and of itself.

Bibliography (Slide 20)

Sinek, Simon(2009, September) *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*
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