



Leadership Strengths & Blind Spots

Brandon Kresca

Tippecanoe Valley High School

Akron, IN

Background Leading to Inquiry

- When I accepted the position of principal at Tippecanoe Valley High School in May of 2019 I was:
 - 29 years old, only in education for 7 years.
 - Only an Asst. Principal for 1 year and 3 months.
- My first two years as a building principal I experienced:
 - Low school morale & extreme turnover.
 - Passing of a teacher & a revered student.
 - Substantiated School Threat
 - Finally... COVID.



Background Leading to Inquiry

- How I felt before starting IPLI.
 - Extremely burned out.
 - Questioning my abilities & effectiveness.
 - Wondering if I wanted to do this job and whether I could for many years to come.
 - Feeling the real effect of all the Covid decision making.
 - Feeling like I fractured a lot of relationships and the culture I worked so hard to build.
 - Feeling like this job was consuming my life (losing friends, single, no time for hobbies, never home).
- My mentors, and those I have worked closely with, have all told me my greatest strengths as an educator, and how I make up for my lack of experience, is through:
 - My situational awareness
 - My ability to reflect on my own practice.
 - My ability to play into my strengths and consistently improve on my weaknesses.





Purpose of Inquiry

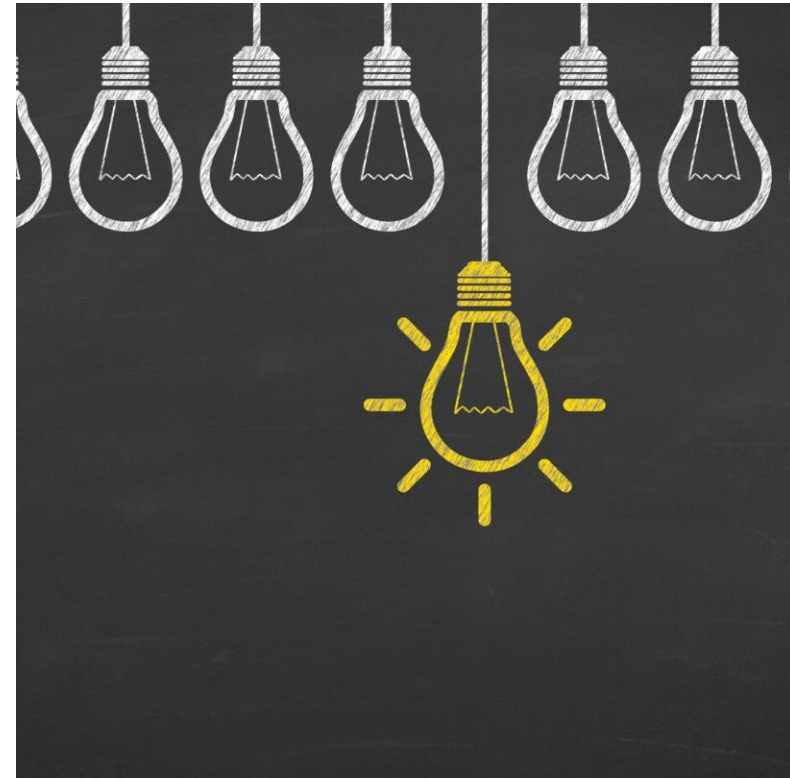
- Determine what I felt my strengths and weaknesses are as a leader and whether they matched what others perceived? Did I have any *blind spots*?
-

My Wondering...

I wonder how my strengths and my blind spots as a leader affect my leadership capacity? Would a better understanding of my blind spots improve my ability to lead effectively and improve my connection with each staff member?

My Actions

1. **Brainstormed options for data gathering.**
2. **Read & Researched- *Blind Spots***
3. **Created Initial Survey to School Improvement Team**
4. **Selected Colleagues for Initial Interviews**
5. **Evaluated Initial Data**
6. **Refined Approach using *Johari Window Exercise* – Rhonda Roos**
7. **Evaluated Findings from *Johari Window***
8. **Next Steps and AR Presentation**



Data Collection



Survey Data- School
Improvement Team



Colleague Interviews



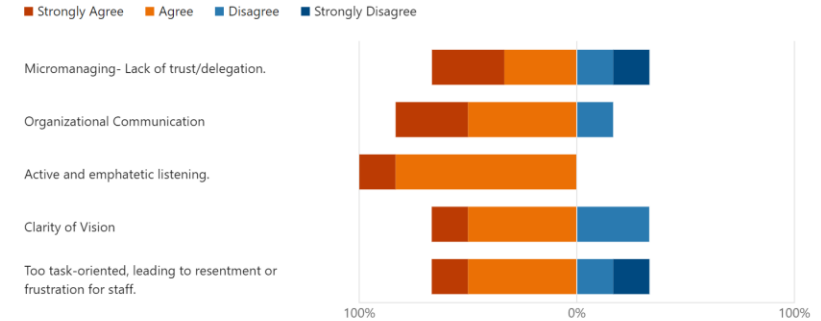
Johari Window Exercise with
Two Teacher Leaders

My Data-Survey of SIT Team

- <https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=d0Fi2F-wP02dw3tb3a6Of3TIYWGfaF1GrdzEuu884jBUNkJSR0NRTkU0SEg1R0haRTA2M0tDVklIMi4u&Token=55e041a8bb8847e2b47b6fc3212d9efa>

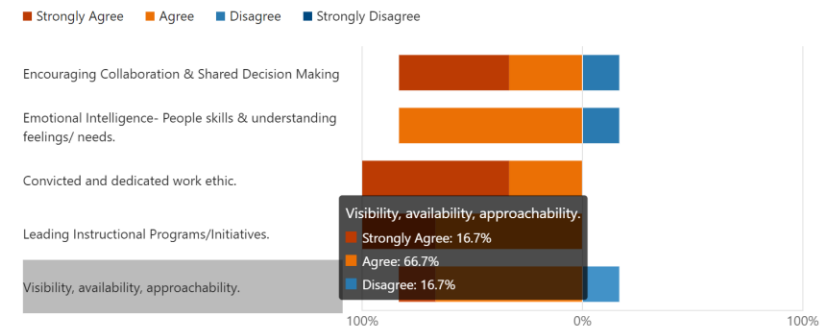
3. Please respond to each of my "Perceived Blind Spots" using the Likert Scale to communicate how much you agree or disagree with this Leadership Blind Spot. (0 point)

[More Details](#)



1. Please respond to each of my "Perceived Leadership Strengths" using a Likert Scale to communicate how much you agree/disagree with this perceived strength. (0 point)

[More Details](#)



My Data- Colleague Interviews (Superintendent, Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach

- [Interview #1- DK.docx](#)
- [Interview #2- SR.docx](#)
- [Interview #3- BC.docx](#)



IPLI Year 1 Action Research Project

Interview- Superintendent, Blaine Conley

Wondering-

- I wonder how my strengths and my blind spots as a leader affect my leadership capacity? Would a better understanding of my blind spots improve my ability to lead effectively and improve my connection with each staff member?

Reminded me that I am not going to connect with each staff member, that is impossible. You have to focus on earning everyone's trust. Being honest and approachable has to be the goal.

Question #1:

- What do you feel are my greatest strengths as a leader?
 - **Personality and temperament.**
 - **Very coachable, which allows me to be approachable to staff.**

Question #2

- In what specific ways do you see me leaning into these strengths and building my leadership capacity?
 - **Focusing on PLC's. This process lends to my strengths. I am empowering my staff.**
 - **I have enough confidence in my abilities to empower others. This takes humility, which I have.**

Question #3:

- What do you feel may be some of my "blind spots" as a leader?
 - **Age and my inexperience.**
 - **But I have figured out how to empower others and help deal with these blind spots.**
 - **Understands situational awareness which is key to recognizing and counteracting blind spots.**

Question #4:

- What do you see as potential reasons why these blind spots are present? Why is it hard for me to see these blind spots?

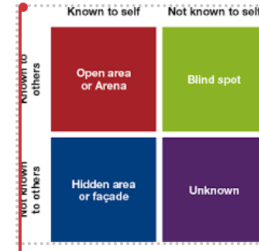
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Question #5:

- Do you have any suggestions for small steps I can take, or "warning systems", that may lead me to better understand/improve my blind spots?
 - **Who do you trust on the staff? Who comes in and shuts your door and tells you what is up? Example=Shriver always used to be that person.**
 - **Have some options for this: Cami, Hutton, Walker, June. Seem to have built this up with the SIT team.**

My Data- Johari Window Exercise With Teacher Leaders

- [Johari Window Sheet.docx](#)



THE JOHARI WINDOW EXERCISE

with Dr. Rhonda J. Roos

We're asking for advice with actionable steps! (not feedback)

STEP #1 ~ PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

[AR Data.docx](#)

STEP #2 ~ COLLEAGUE SELECTION:

Erin McKinley & Cami Shriver

STEP #3 ~ EXPLANATION to COLLEAGUES:

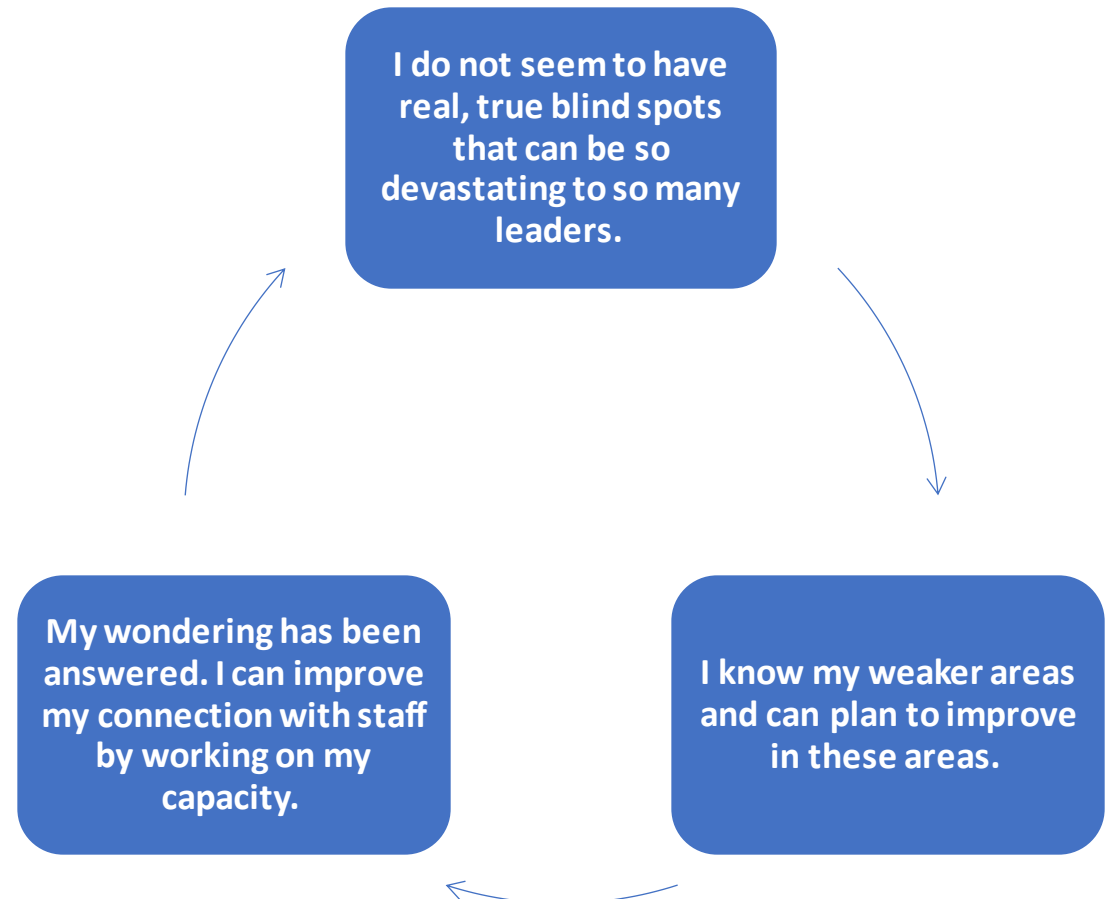
- "You know guys, I really really want your help. I honestly do.
- I choose you two, and I really don't want you to tell anyone else about this. I really trust you to keep this between you and I. I just want your help specifically because I trust you two.
- I genuinely want to get better. In year 4 now, I don't ever want to stop learning and growing. Truthfully, I don't really get much honest and good feedback on my work.
- So, I want you two to think... I want you to think about things that I may not know about myself. Anything, anything at all.

STEP #4 ~ FINDINGS:

- Always just seem to be in a big rush.
 - Some of the people who are more involved, or more confident in themselves know they are not being ignored, but others feel they are.
 - Some people don't at all feel connected because they feel there is a lack of purposeful interactions.
 - Some teachers recognize that I am a doer, and that I work really really hard for the school, which is why I am busy.
- Be out and about more.
 - Teachers notice that when I do this that I feel better or are more happy.
 - Teachers enjoy this. They want to be seen and heard.

- Too many times it is fly-by conversations due to being in a hurry.
- Suggestion is to try to create moments to connect with people.
 - Ideas given= reserving a day once in a while to just go check-in on people during preps. Just see how they are doing and talk to them.
 - Try to track the teaches that may feel like I am not talking to as much. Try to seek those teachers out.
- More guidance and direction.
 - Most teachers are perfectionists and so they expect to know exactly where we are going with things.
 - The best example can be in morning meetings. The School Impact Teams I think need to know what they are expected to be doing or be given suggestions.
 - We discussed how I may be able to restructure some things in the leadership team. It is ok to give these teachers a little bit of responsibility. To give them productive work to oversee and do. Erin and Cami really did say they would love to help shoulder some of the burden if it is very meaningful and purposeful work.
 - May want to reflect on the systematic processes in the school. Need to focus on not just the opportunities to grow, but also how this can be tracked with data and how people will be held accountable.

My Discoveries



Where to Next...

- For the rest of this year, I need to lean into my strengths and address my visibility and presence with the staff.
- For next school year, I need to follow my gut and refocus again from initiatives, decisions, and change; instead, focus again on relationships and servant leadership.
- Look to the two teachers who participated in the Johari Window Exercise to be the Teacher Leaders for IPLI Year 2.
- In Year 2 IPLI Action Research, try to improve the school while focusing my efforts on people not programs.

Bibliography

- Shaw, R. B. (2016) The Logic and Limits of Leadership Blindspots. *Leader to Leader*. 12-17.
- Shafer, J. & Bryant, A. & Reimer, D (2020). Revealing Leaders' Blind Spots. *Strategy + Business*, Autumn 2020 (Issue 100).
- Scharmner, O.C. (2008). Uncovering the Blindspot of Leadership. *Leader to Leader*. 52-59



Year 1 Template for AR Narrative

[Title of Action Inquiry Project]

Principal Name: Brandon Kresca

School Name: Tippecanoe Valley High School

Principal's Email Contact: krescab@tvsc.k12.in.us

Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slides 2 & 3)

Outline what led you to this particular inquiry. Include the following:

- In all reality, my journey into becoming a building principal happened extremely quickly, at a pace that is hard to even imagine. I taught 8th grade ELA for 5 ½ school years, then transitioned into the role of Assistant Principal. I thought I would be in this role for quite some time, but only a year later I was asked to be the principal of Tippecanoe Valley High School. My first few years at that were very challenging. The school longed for consistency and integrity in its leadership and so this posed some tasks to rebuild a school culture and trust in the staff. In addition, we were experiencing large amounts of retirement and turnover. I started my first year as a principal with no assistant principal and no experienced school counselors. Quickly then I was faced with challenges such as death, school threats, and then of course the Covid Pandemic.
- The issue that led to my action research is, after the last two years of the Covid pandemic, I felt defeated, burned out, and questioning my decisions and my abilities. I felt in that span of time I lost all that I built in my first year as the building principal. I felt things were still going fine, but I was not the same leader I was the day I started. So, I decided I needed to engage in a deep reflection on my leadership capacity, specifically my strengths and weaknesses. At the IPLI Summer Seminar, Dr. Andrews talked in detail about “blind spots” and I became fascinated by this concept and felt it would be good for me to find out if I too had them.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 4)

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to . . . Determine what I felt my strengths and weaknesses are as a leader and whether they matched what others perceived. I needed to find out if I had any blind spots.

My Wondering (Slide 5)

I wonder how my strengths and my blind spots as a leader affect my leadership capacity? Would a better understanding of my blind spots improve my ability to lead effectively and improve my connection with each staff member?

My Actions (Slide 6)

In this step, begin by outlining how you gained insights into your wondering. Then, share what you did to conduct this AR cycle.

In this section, provide the following:

An excellent way to think about creating these segments is chronological – what did you do first, second, third, etc. You should include such things as the timing and amount of each detail you share.

1. My first step was to try to figure out what kind of data I wanted to gather that ultimately would support the answer to my wondering. I decided that I really wanted to get mostly qualitative data, in which I gathered it in the most genuine way I thought possible. I wanted to speak to the people I lead. I wanted to try to build trust and respect through asking for genuine feedback on my leadership capacity.
2. Next, I began creating the research such as my survey to my School Improvement Team and the questions I wanted to ask my colleagues (superintendent, assistant principal, instructional coach).
3. After this initial research I felt like I did not have enough meat to my AR. So then ironically, at the January Seminar we heard from Dr. Rhonda Roos. She gave a shoutout to my wondering and my work on blind spots and invited me to contact her. So I did. This was such an amazing opportunity to meet with Rhonda and she steered me towards this process/activity called “Johari Window”.
4. I started implementing the steps to this activity by engaging in personal reflection again, but then picking two teacher leaders to elicit some honest feedback from. I set this all up and then got some amazing information from them, all by just asking them to give me feedback on anything that I do or don’t do, ways I act, things I say, and especially things I ought to know about myself.
5. Lastly, I began processing all this data/information together and creating my AR presentation.

Data Collection (Slide 7)

Share the ways you collected data to understand better what was implemented.

I had three main pieces of data that I was able to gather, from three targeted populations.

1. Survey of School Improvement Team Teachers- This was meant as a way for me to try to “predict or validate” that what I believe are my leadership strengths and weaknesses were related to what people perceive them to be.
2. Interviews with my colleagues- This was meant to get some really specific, practical information from people who may see my leadership capacity very clearly.
3. Lastly, my interview with the two teacher leaders using the Johari Window Exercise- This was just what I needed to try to get the absolute most authentic information I could and for me to dig real deeply into my findings from this exercise.

My Data (Slides 8-10)

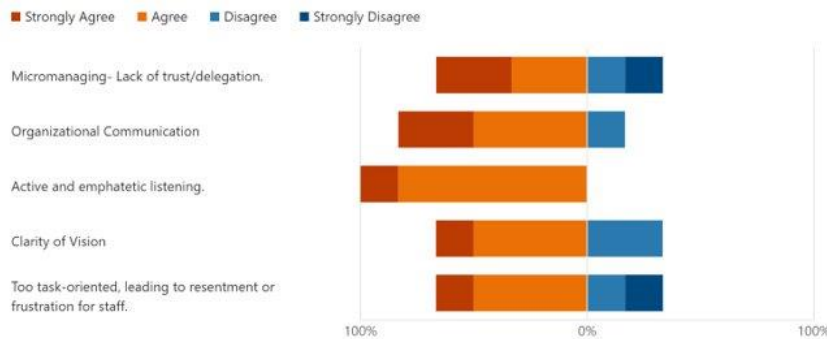
Display data and share the ways you analyzed the data. **You may need additional slides.**

Quantitative data is often presented in graphs/charts,/tables. You may wish to give quantitative data in at least two kinds of graphs organized in different ways to help you explain various aspects of your learning.

- Likert Scales from my original survey.

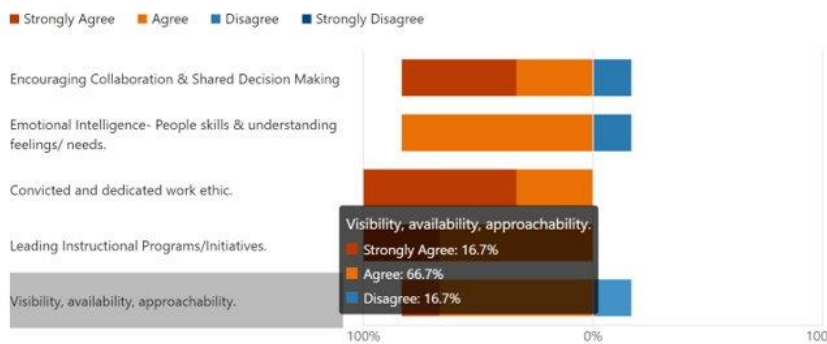
3. Please respond to each of my "Perceived Blind Spots" using the Likert Scale to communicate how much you agree or disagree with this Leadership Blind Spot. (0 point)

[More Details](#)



1. Please respond to each of my "Perceived Leadership Strengths" using a Likert Scale to communicate how much you agree/disagree with this perceived strength. (0 point)

[More Details](#)



Qualitative data is often presented as excerpts of text from a journal, teacher reflections, etc. You may wish to offer qualitative data by including one or more text samples to help you explain different aspects of your learning.

- The majority of my data was from interviews and feedback that I received from different people.
 - [Interview #1- DK.docx](#)
 - [Interview #2- SR.docx](#)
 - [Interview #3- BC.docx](#)
 - [Johari Window Sheet.docx](#)

My Discoveries (Slide 11)

In this step, summarize your learning in two to three brief statements that illustrate the most critical facets of what you learned:

- Learning Statement One: I learned that I still am a very situational and self-aware leader, which luckily showed that I do not have any true blind spots that often are extremely detrimental to leaders.
- Learning Statement Two: I also learned more about the weaker areas of my leadership abilities/capacity. I was able to get good feedback on these, which I have really never received before. This has allowed me to give some thought to next steps or ways to improve on these areas.
- Learning Statement Three: Lastly, I learned what I really wondered. The more I know about my weaknesses, and I lean into my strengths as a leader, the more connected the staff feels with me and the more trust I have. It is important for me to understand what is important to them, and what they want in a leader, which I was able to do through my inquiry project.

Next, restate each learning statement and explain it. The explanation of your learning statement should refer to your data, and you should include actual data within the Description.

For example, my likert scale survey in which I asked the School Improvement team about my weaknesses and my strengths was very much related to what I perceived mine to be.

The other piece of specific data that helped me to learn more about my weak areas was the qualitative feedback I got from two of my colleague interviews, specifically Staci our instructional coach. Then the best feedback I got was from the two teachers I met with using the Johari Window exercise. They told me things that I needed to know in order to work on them more.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slide ?)

In this step, reflect on your action research journey as a whole that accomplishes the following:

- General reflection on the specific action research cycle just completed (Some Questions to Consider: What have you learned about your school? What have you learned about your teachers? What are the implications of what you have learned for your work?)
- Generation of Directions for The Future (Some Questions to Consider: What changes will you make or have made in your practice? What new wonderings do you have?)

As you present your concluding thoughts, once again, consider weaving a reference or two into your conclusions to connect your findings to the field of administration at large.

Bibliography (Slide 12)

In this step, provide the bibliographic information for any references you cited in any of the previous actions. List your references in alphabetical order by author's last name. Follow APA, 6th Edition, to enter information about each of your references. Some examples are

provided below. Examples of other reference types can be found here:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/06/>. You may also find the Citation Machine helpful (<http://citationmachine.net/>).

Single Author Article

- Shaw, R. B. (2016) The Logic and Limits of Leadership Blindspots. *Leader to Leader*. 12-17.
- Scharmner, O.C. (2008). Uncovering the Blindspot of Leadership. *Leader to Leader*. 52-59

Multiple Authors Article

- Shafer, J. & Bryant, A. & Reimer, D (2020). Revealing Leaders' Blind Spots. *Strategy + Business, Autumn 2020 (Issue 100)*.

Citing Your Presentation and Publication

Congratulations on completing the Year 1 Action Inquiry process! You can list your project as both a professional presentation and a professional publication on your resume. Here are examples of the correct ways to cite:

Presentation

Andrews, K. (2022). Providing effective feedback. Presented at the annual Indiana Principal Leadership Institute Action Research Showcase, Indianapolis, IN.

Publication

Andrews, K. (2022). Providing effective feedback. Retrieved from <https://Web address>