

Maintaining My Identity

By: Kevin Kemper, Indian Creek

Contact: kevinkemper@msdlt.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

The previous five years of my life have been a whirlwind of change. My wife and I have had two more children, in addition to the one we already have, plus three job changes including making the move from the classroom to the principal's office in three years. At the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year and carrying over through the summer "vacation", I found myself far too frequently stressed out and having a short fuse with my family and even staff. I was not enjoying the job as I was expecting to, and as I previously was at the beginning of the school year. I reflected often throughout the summer on reasons why I was still carrying so much burden even when school was out. The tipping point was when a close friend of mine came up to me and said, "You are not yourself anymore. You need to start taking care of yourself." I took his words to heart because he has known me both as a teacher and administrator. He knew how enjoyable I was to be around back in 2012 when I was a classroom teacher. This conversation motivated me to rethink how I was doing things. I was really happy with how much I was able to accomplish in my first year as principal. I felt like the school was in a great place and heading in the right direction, and I did not want to sacrifice any of my efforts that I had put into my first year, but something needed to change. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to find balance between being completely committed to my school while still maintaining my identity as a calm fun-loving individual.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered what ways would being more intentional with my time during the school day benefit me outside of school hours.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering created a system for planning my day and becoming more intentional with my time. I started by capitalizing on the tools I already utilized; Google Keep and Outlook Calendar. I previously used Google Keep as a virtual Post-It note to help me keep track of all the items on my To-Do List. As items make their way to my desk I document them in Google Keep. I also previously used Outlook Calendar to schedule my appointments. These were two pieces of my work day that I wanted to maintain as they already supported me in being intentional with my time.

Next, I created a daily planner. The planner was taken from another principal from the IPLI cohort. The purpose of the dialy planner was to be intentional with my day. Each morning I would stop and take time to plan the day. I would write down both appointments from my Outlook Calendar along with To-Do items from my Google Keep app. Based on those two piece of information I would map out my day into half hour increments. This was a practice that I had not done the year before. Previously, I created a to do list and then tackled those items as time was made available. Now I was assigning specific times for my To Do items and intentionally scheduling them throughout my day. This created a great sense of accomplishment. I was able to visibly see everything that was getting accomplished. This allowing me to leave at the end of the day knowing that I had accomplished something and had done enough with my day.

Finally, I utilized both Google Photos and Map My Run. Running has always been enjoyable to me as well as a great stress reliever. Map My Run documented the number of runs I was able to accomplish. During the 2015-2016 school year I failed to complete any runs. During the 2016-2017 school year, with this system in place, I was able to complete XX runs. I used Google Photos to document the times that I was able to take for myself and with my family. Some of my greatest documented moments included attending a Purdue Football game, traveling twice to Naples, Florida with my family, and simply taking my children to a park after school. These were events that were not occurring the year before. The year before I didn't realize how important these moments were and that if I didn't plan them, then they wouldn't happen.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, (two/three) important things I learned include:

- Learning Statement One: take time to plan
- Learning Statement Two: plan time for myself and my family or it won't happen
- Learning Statement Three: monitor my time and ensure there is balance.

Take time to plan. I realized the value in doing this when I started using the daily planner. Prior to the daily planner, I would tackle tasks as I had time. This resulted in never feeling complete. Planning my day out every morning was the best thing I started doing in this action research. It allowed me to know what I was doing and when I was doing it. This ended up carrying over into our vacation with my family of five. We would end each day by planning out our next day. This made our vacation even more enjoyable because we weren't wasting time asking each other what we wanted to do.

Plan time for myself and family or it won't happen. This is something that I did not do a year ago. My whole life I have never needed to plan time to have fun and take time for myself. That was something that I did all that time, including weeknights, weekends, and school breaks. Now, being a father of three and an administrator there are no weeknights off, weekends, or school breaks unless you schedule them. This was something that no one tells you prior to being a parent or administrator.

Monitor your time and ensure balance. This learning came late in the year after I was planning my day and making time for myself and family. I was still finding myself over stressed and short tempered. Near the end of the action research process I started reflecting on how I spent my time. I was taking time for myself and family but it was minimal compared to the time dedicated to school. So not only is it important to take the time but it is equally important to balance the time.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Change is inevitable. Personally my family was growing, and professionally I was receiving multiple promotions. With these changes there has to be time for reflection. This Action Research has allowed me to reflect. These changes have brought a lot of positives to my life. What followed all these positives was an enormous amount of responsibility that I was not ready to manage, both at home and at school. This action research along with my time in IPLI has taught me the value of taking time to plan my day, being more intentional with my time, and planning time for myself to ensure a balance were steps that I was previously not doing. At the conclusion of my action research I am at a much better place.

I first met with my IPLI mentor on June 6, 2016. During that first meeting, I had to fight back tears as I was explaining my struggle with him. It is now a year later and I am proud of the progress I have made. I can talk

about my children without feeling guilty. I can talk about school without getting mad, and I intentionally plan time for myself, including a camping trip with friend this weekend.

As I move forward, I will continue to utilize the daily planner. I will grow my planning strategies as time goes on to ensure I am balancing both my dedication to my school and my need to have time for myself and family. Prior to this reflection I wasn't aware that I even needed to do that. People always tell you that you need to take time for yourself. What I didn't realize was that I needed to strategically plan it into my schedule to ensure that it happened.

References:

N/A