

Making an Impact on Learning

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

Being a new principal at my school, I have a lot of goals for my school. I want instruction to improve, test scores to improve, parents to be supportive of the school, and for staff and students to love to come through the doors every day. As a former instructional coach, I have strengths and experience in instructional leadership that could be an asset to the principalship. Unfortunately, my time is crowded with things that have little impact on instruction and learning. In fact, I found through a time analysis exercise that 78% of my time was spent on managerial tasks.

It is clear that to positively impact student achievement, I must make changes to my own routines and organizational habits. Therefore, the purpose of my action research project is to intentionally protect time and space to utilize my strengths and an instructional leader. I also need to develop organizational skills to maximize both efficiency and influence.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered how I might be intentional with my time to increase the time I spend in classrooms.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, I collected data for five days to determine where I was spending most of my time. I made a list of the responsibilities that I could delegate to others. I began to research and learn what exactly defines an instructional leader. I began listening to podcasts on leadership from "Principal Center Radio." I read *Now We're Talking: 21 Days to High Performance Instructional Leadership* by Justin Baeder. I began reading John Hattie's research about what practices have the most positive impact on student achievement. I also intentionally sought out information about organizational techniques of other principals including digital apps through podcasts and networking.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, important things I learned include:

- An instructional leader focuses on impacting learning, encouraging collaboration, and gives frequent feedback.
- There are many organizational tools to help administrators save time.

Understanding what an instructional leader is has helped me redefine my goals and priorities. I was before narrowly defining what I wanted to improve. I wanted to spend more time in classrooms. While that is still a priority, I realize now that focusing on learning impact and encouraging collaboration are equally important to frequent feedback. Some of the tasks that I considered management could be considered instructional

leadership with a different mindset focused on student impact. I am now actively looking for opportunities to talk about learning impact in every meeting.

I have adopted a few new organizational tools. I began using Evernote again to help me organize my notes especially from meetings. I now schedule my time for observations in my calendar. I have also used Google Keep to help me organize "To-Do" lists and to share them with team members so that we can work together to get tasks completed. I have been listening to podcasts and audiobooks about instructional leadership on my commute to and from school.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Throughout this inquiry project, I found the collaboration with my administrative team through IPLI to be the most powerful part. They pushed me to be reflective and honest, and they also held me accountable to take action. It was obvious that from the beginning of the action research project that my time in classrooms was less because I was reluctant to delegate tasks. My team continued to point out when I was reverting back to sacrificing my goal of being in classrooms to do tasks that other people on my staff had the skills to perform. This process validated that collective efficacy and collaboration are very powerful in sustaining positive change.

Going forward, I must continuously empower others to lead. I have restructured my instructional staff for the next school year to have two instructional coaches with intervention duties. Some of the data collection and leading of professional learning communities will be delegated to these staff members. These changes will immediately allow me more time in classrooms. Additionally, I am focusing my priority on student impact. If there is no positive student impact, then it must be eliminated from the agenda. Evaluating meetings and duties with student impact in mind will ensure better boundaries for the entire staff.

References:

- Baeder, Justin. (2018). *Now We're Talking! 21 Days to High-Performance Instructional Leadership*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press.
- Hattie, John. (2015). "High Impact Leadership." *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 72 (#5), page 36-40.