

## **What Ties Me to My Desk and Keeps Me from the Classrooms and the Building?**

### **Mike Myers, Greensburg Community High School**

#### **BACKGROUND**

With the PCM model indicating I am a Persister (Base) and Thinker (phase), I was interested in learning where I can find balance in completing the tasks of a principal while being present in the hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms throughout the day. This Action Research (AR) project aims to determine where I am spending my time and what is keeping me in my office.

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to examine how I allocate time as a principal, focusing on factors that keep me in my office rather than being present in hallways, classrooms, and communal spaces. Using a weekly work log, I tracked tasks such as emails, meetings, discipline issues, and staff interactions to identify trends, inefficiencies, and common themes. Analyzing this data helped determine whether my time is spent on essential, high-impact activities and informed strategies to enhance leadership presence, ensuring a balanced approach that improves both school operations and culture.

#### **WONDERING**

With this purpose, I wondered what is tying me to my desk and keeping me from the classrooms (informal/formal observations) and building.

#### **METHODS/PROCEDURES**

To gain insights into my wondering, I looked at my daily tasks, interactions with students and staff, human resource issues, and if I was managing or leading the building. Through the process, I also considered if I was stuck being a perfectionist, if I was using the Golden Rule or the Platinum Rule, and if I was worried about how the staff and students perceived me. Lastly, I wondered what my blind spots were and how those items got in my way and got me down.

I collected data from mid-December to the end of February by tracking my time and schedule through my Google calendar (quantitative data), journaling about my week (qualitative data), and reviewing with my secretary about my daily interactions (qualitative data). The data collection was in two parts. At the start of this process, my calendar was task-driven and filled with components to meet the deadlines of the building and district. When I purposely created

time on my calendar for classroom visits, lunch, bus, and hall duty, and meetings with teachers to discuss the curriculum and ideas they had, this led to a different data collection within my journaling.

What I discovered while reading through my data is that I am happier and more energized when I am interacting regularly with my students and staff. When I am tied to my desk and having to deal with central office demands, my overall demeanor and outlook drop while I lose focus and energy. Many times, my calendar is driven by building, district, and area meetings like area district principals, early college network, and our athletic conference, amongst others. When my calendar is filled with these meetings that take place within or out of the district, my attitude is not as positive. The data showed that these meetings cause me to spend more time in the office when I return to complete daily tasks for the building and district instead of spending time outside of my office. My journal writing and talks with my secretary also confirmed that I spent too much time analyzing and completing mundane tasks that I see as managing a building, not leading. My secretary could tell when I was getting stressed and knew I was not out in the building. She would ask if I had walked to the welding lab lately or if I had checked on a student or staff member to get me away from my desk. She even had code words to remind me to pause and breathe to relax and focus.

Early in the process, my data showed that I did not have control of my schedule, and I was not intentionally scheduling items that would get me out of my office and into the hallways. I began first by scheduling all of my observations, formal and informal, in my Google calendar and made those non-negotiable. Next, I scheduled time to supervise the lunchroom and/or after-school bus duty. I also covered classrooms for parts of a period if a teacher needed to leave. These intentionally scheduled times brought me joy, and I still found time to complete the managerial tasks efficiently when I returned to my office. I found I had a better disposition and understanding of the building dynamics and attitude when I was not confined to my office.

## FINDINGS

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things that I learned include: I am happier and better motivated when I am interacting with my students and staff throughout the building. I feel that I am serving and doing my job. I also learned that I can complete managerial tasks more efficiently when I have been away from my desk, mingling in the building. My mind is at ease, and I can focus and complete the tasks quickly.

*I am happier and better motivated when I am interacting with my students and staff throughout the building. I feel that I am serving and doing my job.* This learning statement fuels my servant leadership style and dedication to the building through my Persister base. When I control my calendar, I am responsible and organized. This meets my Thinker phase and helps me remain happy, motivated, and focused.

*I can complete managerial tasks more efficiently when I have been away from my desk, mingling in the building. My mind is at ease, and I can focus and complete the tasks quickly.* When I move around the building and return to my office, I can be more observant and logical in my responses to tasks that I need to complete. These actions meet both my Persister base and Thinker phase in the PCM model.

## CONCLUSION

Where am I heading next? I need to be cognizant of my schedule and time management of my calendar and interactions daily/weekly. This job can take a toll on your psyche, and when I am aware of getting away from my desk and moving throughout the building, I have a better pulse for what is going on in the learning process for my students and staff. I also need to remember to treat my students and staff the way they want to be treated in the framework of the Platinum Rule.

As a base Persister and a phase Thinker, I need to focus on my servant leadership, staying organized, and being observant and conscientious of my time. When I am visible in the building and classroom, interacting with my students and staff, completing tasks, and controlling my time and work structure, my psychological needs are being met, and my overall disposition is positive and conducive to leading my building.

# What Ties Me to My Desk and Keeps Me From the Classrooms and the Building?

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# Background Leading to this Inquiry

- PCM model: Persister (Base) and Thinker (phase)
- I was interested in learning where I can find balance in completing the tasks of a principal while being present in the hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms throughout the day.

*This Action Research (AR) project aims to determine where I am spending my time on and what is keeping me in the office.*

# Purpose of This Inquiry

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to examine how I allocate time as a principal, focusing on factors that keep me in my office rather than being present in hallways, classrooms, and communal spaces.

## My Wondering

With this purpose, I wondered what is tying me to my desk and keeping me from the classrooms (informal/formal observations) and building.

# My Actions

I looked at my daily tasks, interactions with students and staff, human resource issues, and if I was managing or leading the building. Through the process, I also considered:

- If I was stuck being a perfectionist
- If I was using the Golden Rule or the Platinum Rule
- If I was worried about how the staff and students perceived me.
- What my blind spots were and how those items got in my way and got me down.



# Data Collection

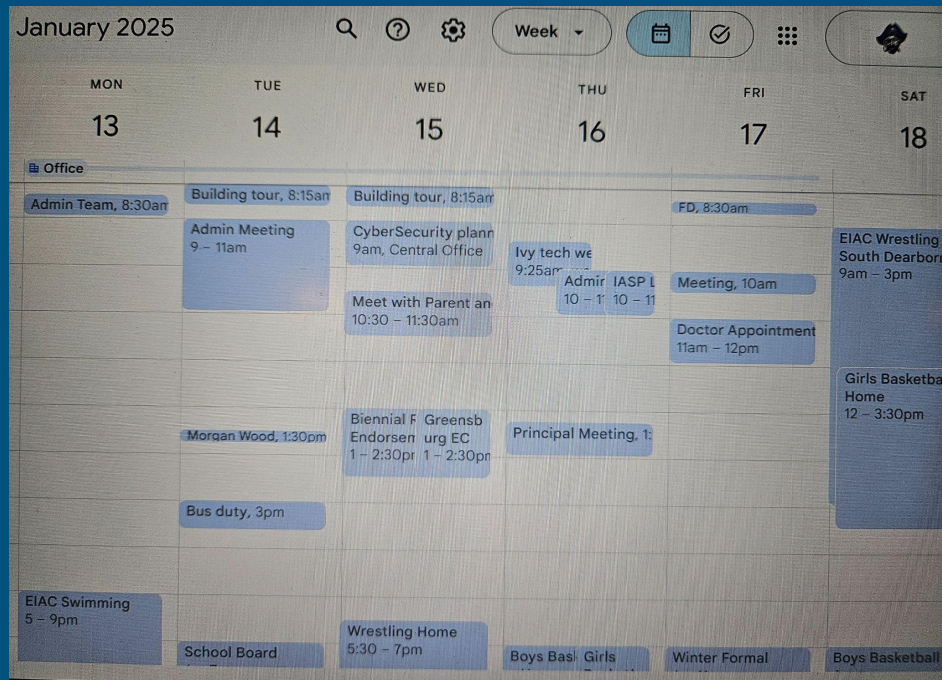
I collected data by tracking my time and schedule in two parts using:

- My Google calendar
- Journaling about my week
- Reviewing with my secretary about my interactions.

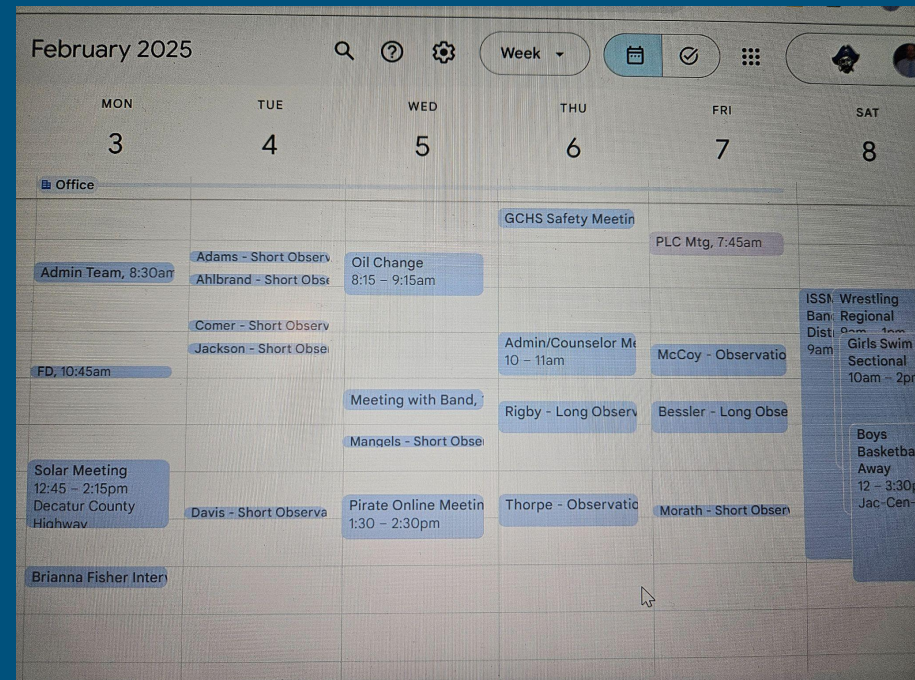
# My Data

## Quantitative Data Collection

### Task Driven



### Building Focus



# My Data

Qualitative Data Journal excerpt:

“After spending nearly two hours responding to and creating emails, returning phone calls, and meeting with my superintendent unscheduled, I realized that I didn’t get into the hallways for passing periods and missed most of the lunch hour. I wonder if my students and staff even know if I am around anymore.”

# My Data

Qualitative Data Journal excerpt:

“Today I had three formal short observations, spent time talking with students during B and C lunches, was present in the hallways during every passing period, and chatted with a few teachers during their prep periods. This was a good day for my spirit and soul. These are the days I enjoy what I do.”

# My Discoveries

## Learning Statements

#1: I am happier and better motivated when I am interacting with my students and staff throughout the building. I feel that I am serving and doing my job.

#2: I can complete managerial tasks more efficiently when I have been away from my desk, mingling in the building. My mind is at ease and I can focus and complete the tasks quickly.

# Learning Statement #1

*I am happier and better motivated when I am interacting with my students and staff throughout the building. I feel that I am serving and doing my job.*

- Fuels my servant leadership style and dedication to the building (Persister)
- When I control my calendar, I am responsible and organized (Thinker)

## Learning Statement #2

*I can complete managerial tasks more efficiently when I have been away from my desk, mingling in the building. My mind is at ease and I can focus and complete the tasks quickly.*

- I am able to be more observant and logical in my responses to tasks (Persister and Thinker)

# Where Am I Heading Next

- Be cognizant of my schedule and time-management
- Treat my staff the way they want to be treated
- Focus on servant leadership, staying organized, and being observant and conscientious of my time.
- Be visible when I am in the building and get into classrooms each and every day