

Promoting Positive Partnerships

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

When I took the position as principal of Brook Park Elementary School, I was the fourth to take the helm in five years. Each principal who came before me had their own vision for the school. Since their time was short lived, there was no true follow through to ensure that their goals and plans would carry on. The lack of consistency in leadership, took a toll on the climate and culture of the school. There was a sense of mistrust of leadership which made collaboration difficult, and took the focus off of educating students. Therefore the purpose of our action research was to encourage building new relationships and strengthening collaboration within our school.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered how setting a protocol for getting to know each other would prove beneficial for our staff in building a collaborative culture that would impact the climate of our school in a positive manner.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we introduced the idea of building relationships to the staff by incorporating team building icebreakers and activities during faculty meetings and staff developments. One of the activities we used was the Compass Points Activity which allowed our teachers to explore the various characteristic and personalities of their colleagues. The goal was that they would utilize the knowledge to:

- Understand how to better communicate and collaborate with their peers individually and in groups.
- Use the strengths and limitations of peers for collaborative teamwork.
- Improve the practices of interviewing and hiring new staff to create a cohesive and balanced staff.
- Be an example to the students of how working towards a common greater cause requires everyone to work together.

Our team created surveys and questionnaires that were given to the staff at different points of the action research to determine the types of off campus events and activities they felt would be effective for building relationships while promoting collegiality. Based on the information collected, the activities planned were bowling, haunted maze, lunch and a school basketball game, and dinner.

Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing our data, we learned that:

- Using the Compass Points Activity aided us to work with each other better especially with PLC and committee meetings.
- An average of 60% of the staff returned the surveys and/or questionnaires.

- Out of the 49 certified and classified staff, 14% consistently participated in the staff outings.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Our team has learned the following:

- Building a positive staff culture and climate is a skill that takes time and will always necessitate consistent attention and nurturing.
- Fostering collaboration and teamwork requires strong, collegial relationships.
- It is important to know your staff as individuals. Gaining an understanding of their characteristics and personalities allows for each person's strengths to be used as a benefit and any limitations to be developed.

References:

http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/compass_points.pdf