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# Racing for Time

HARRIS ELEMENTARY

JAN KEHRT

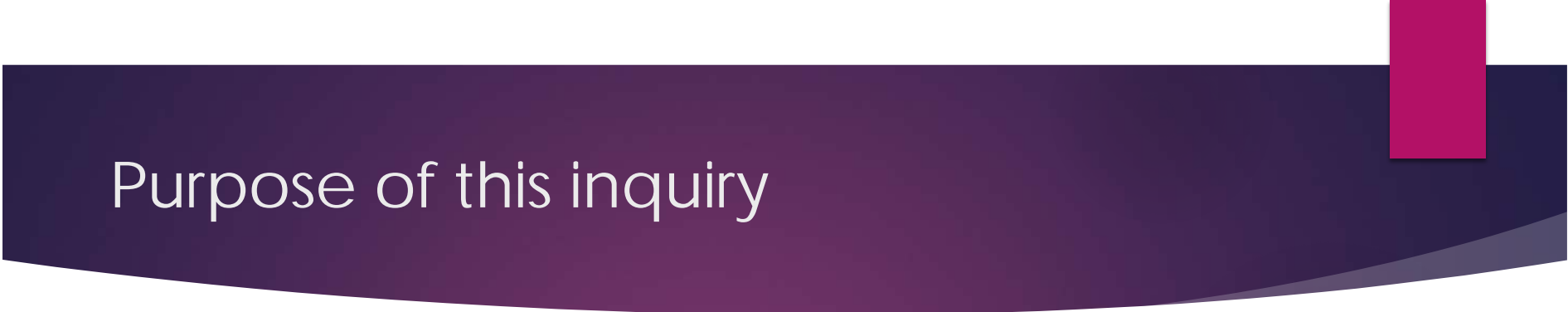
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# Background Leading to this inquiry

- ▶ Why are there days I feel like a hamster on a wheel racing for more time?
- ▶ Principals are pulled in many different directions and have many responsibilities and demands on their time.



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## Purpose of this inquiry

- ▶ Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to show that while I can't slow down time, I can show how I became more intentional in building relationships and being present in classrooms more often.

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# My wondering

- ▶ With this purpose, I wondered how I can make an intentional effort to prioritize my responsibilities in order to be present in more classroom learning.

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## My actions

- ❖ Keep a daily journal for at least 7 days of what currently takes place during my work day.
- ❖ Quantify the minutes being in classrooms and the number of minutes being in “office mode”.
- ❖ Take more photos of being actively present in classrooms.

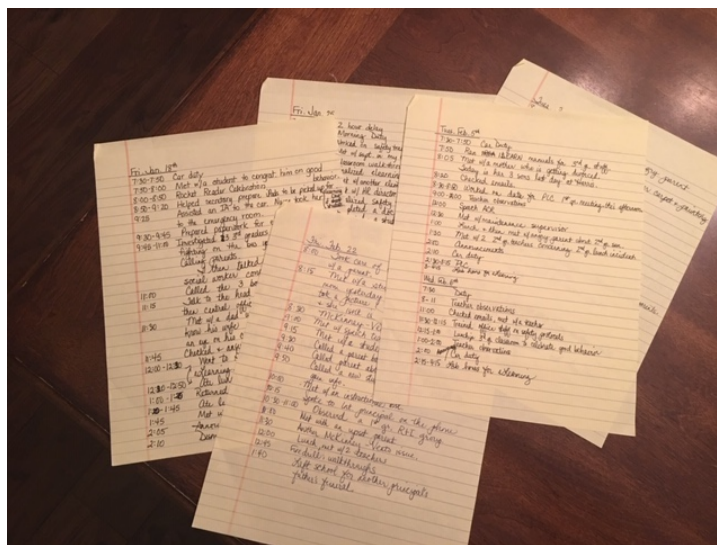
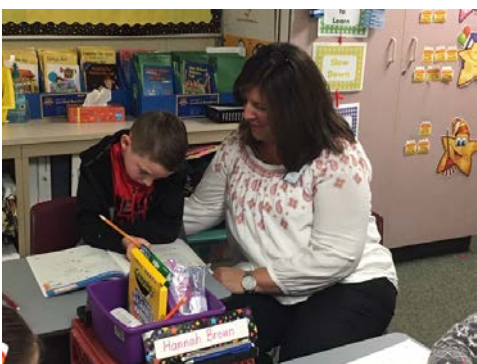
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# Data collection

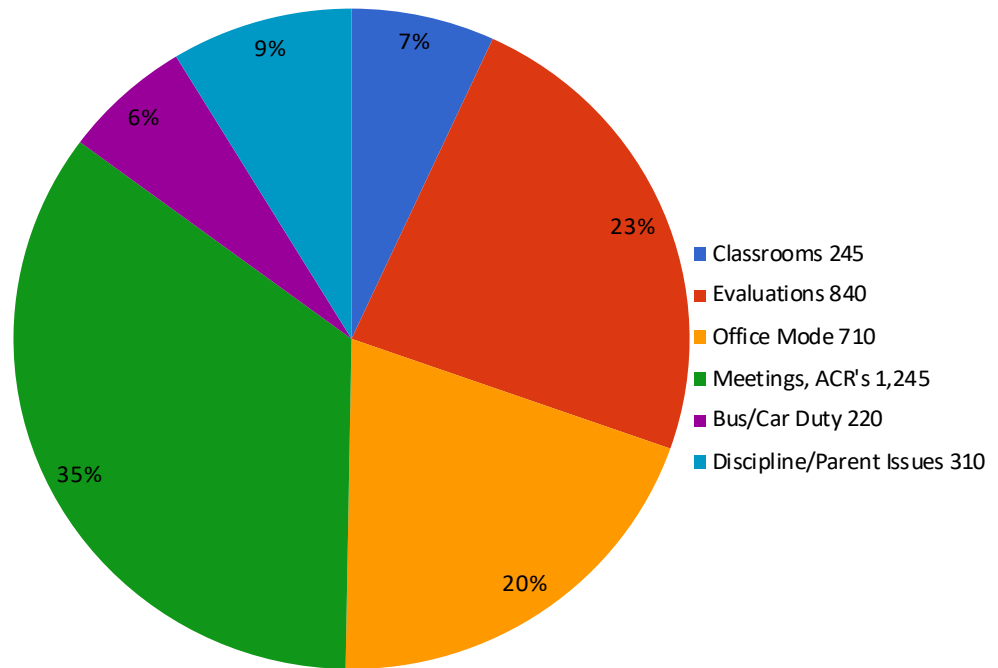
- ▶ Daily Journal
- ▶ Quantify Minutes
- ▶ Photos

# My data



# My data

Minutes for 8 Days





# My discoveries

- ❖ My students and teachers need me to be in classrooms more in order to observe instruction and learning and be a hands on building leader. I found I only spent 7% of my time in classrooms during the study.
- ❖ I did not realize the large amount of time (35%) I spent in meetings. My superintendent sees great value in meeting. Thus, I will find other areas where I can gain additional time to spend in classrooms.
- ❖ I learned as a principal, there are several areas I can improve upon in order to spend more time in classrooms. These include 9% in discipline/parent issues and 20% in office mode.

# Where I am heading next

- ▶ It was eye opening to see where my time was being spent. I will begin with small changes in order to make a bigger impact.
- ▶ The first change will be to rethink the open door policy. My secretary will schedule meetings with parents, as needed, instead of me trying to be ready to put out fires at a minutes notice.
- ▶ The second change will be to get out of my office. Setting goals such as walking through the school at least 4 times a day and actually scheduling time on my calendar to be in classrooms.
- ▶ The third change will be to follow the people during the day, paperwork at night policy. One can become consumed with answering emails, returning phone calls, completing report deadlines and completing teacher evaluations. Instead, I will prioritize classroom visits during the day and the office mode criteria after school and in the evening.

- ▶ *All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.*

*~Gandalf, from The Lord of the Rings*

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# Bibliography

- Dana, N.F. (2009). *Leading with passion and knowledge: The principal as action researcher*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin.
- Johnson, J., Shira, L. & Perret, K. (2017). *The coach approach to school leadership: Leading teachers to higher levels of effectiveness*. ASCD.

## IPLI Jan Kehrt's Action Inquiry Project Narrative

Slide 1: The title of my action inquiry project is Racing for Time.

Slide 2: I often ask myself why there are days I feel like a hamster on a wheel and I am racing for more time. As principals, we are pulled in many different directions and have many responsibilities and demands on our time. For example, how many times a day do I hear, "Mrs. Kehrt, do you have a minute?"

Slide 3: I've thought about this a lot. Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry is to show that while I can't slow down time, I can show how I can become more intentional in building relationships and being present in classrooms more often.

Slide 4: My wondering is how can I make that intentional effort to prioritize my responsibilities in order to be present in more classroom learning. I have a fairly small elementary school, so I am the one and only. I don't have an assistant principal. I need to intentionally make an effort to find time for what is important as a building leader.

Slide 5: How did I do this? 1. I kept a daily journal for at least 7 days of what currently takes place during my work day. If you leave with nothing else from this presentation, I highly recommend you do this one thing. It is amazing how many directions we are pulled in a given day, without even realizing it. 2. I quantified the minutes I was in classrooms versus the number of minutes I was in "office mode." Office mode meaning answering phone calls, emails, meetings, meeting with individual teachers, meeting with parents, etc. 3. I took photos of being actively present in classrooms.

Slide 6: (Show the daily journal, quantified minutes and photos.)

Slide 7: Here is more of my data. My students loved being part of the photos! And, as you can see, I literally just wrote down what I did every minute of the day for 7 days.

Slide 8: I then quantified those minutes. This graph shows that I spent 55% of my time in meetings and office mode. I was only spending 7% of my time in classrooms. Something needed to change.

Slide 9: I knew that my students and teachers deserve to have me present in classrooms more. I knew how important it is for me to observe instruction and learning and also be a hands on building leader. I found I spent 35% in meetings. This is valued in my school corporation. Thus, I will find other areas where I can gain additional time to spend in classrooms. Two of those areas are office mode (20%) and discipline/parent issues (9%).

Slide 10: Logging my daily time schedule was eye opening to me. And I know I need to begin to make small changes in order to make a larger impact. The first change will be to rethink my

open door office policy. My secretary will schedule meetings with parents, as needed, instead of me trying to be ready to put out fires at a minute's notice. And let's be realistic, unless it is an emergency, it never hurts to allow parents to cool down a little before meeting with them, as long as it is within 24 hours. The second change will be to get out of my office. My goals will be to walk through the school at least 4 times a day and actually scheduling time on my calendar to be in classrooms. Finally, my third change will be to work with people during the day and work on paperwork at night. It's too easy to become consumed with answering emails, phone calls, completing reports and teacher evaluations during the day. I realize, instead, how important it is to prioritize classroom visits during the day and complete the office mode and paperwork after school and in the evening.

I will leave you with this quote by Gandalf from The Lord of the Rings: "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." It seems so simple, doesn't it?