

Reflection as Change Agent

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

Looking within and reflecting upon our own leadership practices can be a daunting task. There is always the rush to make a decision, time is of the essence, but what if time was taken to reflect, think, consider decisions prior to making them? How might this impact one's leadership practices? I would not consider myself to be much of a "reflector", so to speak, rather, I have always been one to get the job done and move on to the next task. Moving into my third year as principal, I often heard my assistant superintendent telling me "the decision doesn't have to be made today". Was I always in a rush to a decision that I was compromising the decision-making process? Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to take time to reflect and consider how it would effect my decision-making and leadership practices.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if reflective practices on a routine basis would improve my decision-making prowess, which in turn would improve leadership practices in my building.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wondering, I began keeping a journal daily. The journal began as a note-taking strategy to remind myself of what exactly the day entailed, from meetings with parents, to phone calls, to staff meetings, etc. Along with my trusty notebook, I would take time each evening, before bed, to reflect on the day. As time progressed, I found myself taking fewer and fewer notes and spending more time quietly in reflection, whether at night, or in those brief quiet moments in my office after an event/issue/conundrum had taken place. I continue to use the notebook and really am continuing to collect data on a daily basis! I've never stopped collecting data!

My note-taking became almost a shorthand, of sorts, with plus and minuses to indicate my feelings on a situation. A star, even, might mean that a meeting went fantastically and that I felt good about the outcome. For me personally, this reflection and growing confidence from the time spent in reflection began to be its own data set as my confidence grew and I began inserting reflection into the professional development I do with my teachers.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned include: 1) Taking time to reflect on decisions, rather than jumping to quick decisions, made for better decision-making; 2) As I became more reflective, I found myself asking my staff to become more reflective themselves, which increased the number of instructional discussions held with staff.

Better decision-making was evident in my building. As amazing as it may sound, the office became a calmer place. It seemed as I calmed myself through reflective practices, the tension in the air seemed to dissipate. Several guests noted the change in our office with statements such as..."it's quiet in here compared to last time I was here." "Did you guys do something different in here?"

Additionally, my staff became more reflective, with 50% of staff initiating instructional practice discussions with me after receiving walk through comments. This is an increase of 40% in the same time last school year!

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Through action research, I have found that reflective practices make me a better school leader. I have also learned that when I am reflective, my staff become more reflective as well. As a Focus Priority school, in near takeover status, this action research project could not have come at a more opportune time. The reflective practices which have begun in my building this year are moving our building in a much needed positive direction.

As we continue down the path of reflection in my building, I plan to weave in reflective practices into our weekly professional development meetings to model to teachers how reflection can be used with our students, as well.

References:

N/A