

## **Action Research Project - Team Time**

### **Sonna Schafer IPLI Cohort 7**

*Will strengthening relationships between students & staff increase the overall achievement & engagement within the building?*

For my project I chose to create a dedicated time in our schedule to strengthen the relationships within my building. The idea of students having a “mentor” throughout elementary school was an idea I started chewing on while I was in EPPSP. The idea of relationships and their true power is one the greatest things I left that program with, and it drives most of my decisions now as a principal. Then, as I started diving into the brain development through the Applied Educational Neuroscience program I just completed, along with how we grow and learn, the idea really began to take root. My two biggest challenges were trying to find a dedicated time for it and getting the staff to buy in.

After a full year in my building, I spent a lot of time going over my notes from the year and I reflected on the “complaints” or the things that were mentioned frequently as something that annoyed or bothered my staff. This was also when I began this program, the timing was perfect. The one thing that kept coming up was our late start Wednesday for PLC. This was in place before I arrived, it is not something that can be changed. The staff didn’t like how the schedule was different on Wednesday’s, they claim it throws the whole day off. Prep times are different, remediation groups are at different times, etc. I can see where the schedule does cause some issues.

Our district also started talking about adopting an SEL curriculum around the start of this program too. The elementary level was not slated to get it for 2 more years, but I know how important this is for our kids so I begged to pilot it. After a few meetings I was granted my request and the grant was re-written to allow for my building to get the supplies early. This was another thing I needed to build into the schedule to make sure it was being done with fidelity. This is when I had a moment...I could create a schedule that would allow a dedicated time to teach SEL, I could fix the Wednesday speed bump, and I could finally have my long time dream of having a weekly team time!

I went over the schedule and basically made everyday start at the same time as our late start Wednesday. It was almost so simple I was mad I didn’t think of it earlier. We now have 8:10-8:40 everyday dedicated to something special. Monday we will teach our SEL curriculum (all at the same time so we can all participate and teachers can

cover for each other if someone is absent), Tuesday is WIN time (looking at publishing a monthly Canner Connection Newspaper with 5th grade, Book Clubs, and math games within the classrooms), Wednesday is still our PLC time for staff (students aren't here on this day), Thursday is WIN time again, and then Friday is Team Time.

Getting the buy in of teachers was not as hard as I expected. They were of course reluctant to give up instructional time, but once I showed them how it would benefit the students and them overall, they were on board. We also have an SEL team that is helping with the onboarding of that program to make the transition easy. They are helping me create the activities each week for Team Time and including them with the SEL schedule. We plan to tie them together as much as possible to make the changes more fluid. It is my hope that by having the plans laid out, being deliberate about asking for student and staff feedback every six weeks, and by actually using that feedback, this program will become a permanent part of our culture at LES. The relationships that will grow because of this will not only increase student achievement and engagement, but stoke the flame within all of my teachers to be fierce advocates for "their" students.



Will strengthening relationships between students & staff increase the overall achievement & engagement within the building?

1. Team Time is a concept I have been pondering for several years. While I was going through the EPPSP program at Butler this “idea” started. The power of relationships is one of the most important things I left with. Students would stay with the same adult all through elementary, new kindergartners would be added each year as the 5th graders move on.
2. Students will meet in their mixed level group every Friday at the start of the day for 30 minutes. The Neuroscience team at school is helping to plan each week’s activities. We are also starting a new SEL curriculum next year and we will be using this time to solidify the week’s concepts.
3. We currently have something called “Amigos” that meet once or twice a month on Friday mornings before school . This is ran by the counselor and she partners up younger students with an older mentor student and they have prescribed activities each meeting. The issue is that students have to be able to get to school early to participate and this limits participation greatly.

# TEAM TIME - Getting Started

## Initial steps in the implementation of my action research project

1. I planted the seed for this at the beginning of the school year last year. I wanted to see if it would take root & gain momentum. Within a few months I overheard teachers asking questions and making comments about things we could do during team time. This is when I knew we needed to move forward.
2. We are implementing this in conjunction with a new SEL curriculum as well. That curriculum needed some built in time in the schedule, so the consistency in the weekly schedule was another selling point for Team Time Friday's.
3. The SEL implementation team agreed to make Team Time a part of the planning process and we have begun to plan the first semester already. It is important that we keep Team Time consistent so that we truly are building capacity of the teachers and supporting the brain development of the students.

## TEAM TIME - Challenges

1. The first challenge will be getting the schedule to a place where this Team Time is just what we do. It is very out of the norm for how things have always been done. New things always pose challenges to some. I will need to make sure the schedule is solid and have a counsel of teachers assist with tweaking it to allow for their voice to be heard.
2. The second challenge will be to make sure the time is spent how we intend it to be spent and not get pushed aside for everything else deemed more important. The question of using this time for remediation because of the pandemic has already come up. The need for this Team Time is going to be more important than ever - for the exact same reason.

## TEAM TIME - Data Collection

1. Survey was sent to staff about the overall concept in February. A few questions/concerns were voiced, most were curious. The only negative was not wanting another thing to plan.
2. Students (grades 1-5) will be sent a google form at the beginning of school asking a few questions to help us guide the planning.
3. Teachers will be holding a virtual “draft” so we can place students. We want teachers to feel empowered by the students they have on their team. Every student will be placed this way.
4. Teachers will be asked to evaluate the first 6 weeks schedule via a google form in July so that tweaks can be made if needed and supplies/copies can be prepped well ahead of time.
5. We will send out another survey to students and teachers at the end of each 6 weeks so that we can keep a pulse on the project and make modifications based on feedback. We know that this project will be more successful if we allow everyone’s voice to be heard.
6. Even with COVID19 on the forefront of educational planning - we still plan on moving forward with our plan. It will be needed more than ever possibly & could still happen virtually to some degree.

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*Connection + Purpose =  
Well-Being*”

-Dr. Lori Desautels



## IT'S CUTE, BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN RELATION TO THIS PROJECT?



### CONNECTION

Students will be connected to the same adult for all 6 years - this allows the relationship to grow and flourish. Students will also be with the same mixed age group of peers each week and each year. This is powerful in strengthening the social structure of our school.



### PURPOSE

Making sure that this time is purposeful will be my job initially; but I want the students to be able to select the service projects we do & help plan the activities. This will be done through surveys every 6 weeks. I want the teachers to see the value of this time.



### WELL BEING

All of these things combined should help with the overall development our students. They will have stronger relationships at school and feel more connected. This should naturally lead to buy in which increases achievement & engagement. It should have a similar effect on the staff.



# Team Time Schedule

## Here is a proposed look at what this schedule might look like in August

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		Launch Team Time in the GYM - introduce coaches/preview some of the activities and benefits.
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		Meet your team - get to know you activity (several will be listed, pick a couple to do)
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		Teams come up with a flag & symbols- random box of supplies provided to each group.
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		Teams finish flag and display them in the cafeteria in assigned spot.
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		Video on what a service project is & students brainstorm ideas they could do. Play quick name game with ball to start & finish.
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		The Great Spaghetti Challenge - each live on FB. Survey link sent out to be completed while teachers are setting up.
Weekly 2nd Steps Lesson		Teacher PLC's		Team Time Challenge in the GYM - Hula Hoop Challenge with traveling trophy.

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TEAM  
TIME!



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**Building stronger relationships between the students and staff can have a lasting impact on how students view school. We want students to always know they have a “person” at school that is their advocate from day one. Teachers will feel more empowered to make changes and take risks to support their students. Students will feel this connection and naturally want to perform better.**

STUDY  
HARD!

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**WIN - WIN!**

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