

Transparent Systems of Connection: Knowing Our Impact on School Success

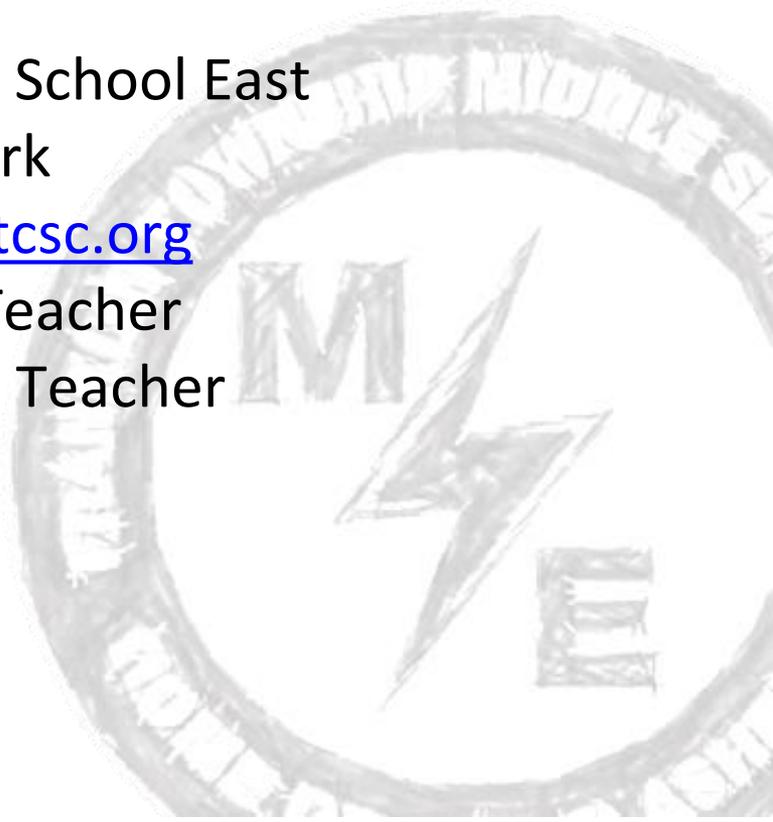
Franklin Township Middle School East

Matt Vandermark

Matt.Vandermark@ftcsc.org

Kristy DeVoy, Math Teacher

Matt Sweetman, Math Teacher



Background Leading to this Inquiry

- FTMS East experienced a leadership change in the middle of the 2017-2018 school year.
- During the first IPLI action research project concerns were quickly identified regarding staff involvement in school improvement.
- These concerns were further validated throughout the school year.

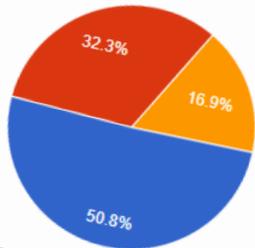


Background Leading to this Inquiry

- Through conversations, HRS Survey, internal surveys, and leadership collaboration the concern was undeniable.
- Leading Indicator 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.

Do you feel like you have input on how the school operates?

65 responses



● Yes
● No
● Yes, but I want more input

Leading Indicator 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.

Administrators 1.5

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Count
1	Data collection systems are in place to collect opinion data from teachers and staff regarding the optimal functioning of our school.	3.00	4.00	3.33	0.47	3
2	Opinion data collected from teachers and staff are archived.	2.00	4.00	3.00	0.82	3
3	Reports of opinion data from teachers and staff are regularly generated.	2.00	3.00	2.67	0.47	3
4	The manner in which opinion data from teachers and staff are used is transparent.	2.00	4.00	3.00	0.82	3
5	Our school improvement team regularly provides input and feedback about our school's improvement plan.	2.00	4.00	3.00	0.82	3

Purpose of This Inquiry

Therefore, the purpose of our action inquiry was to create a more transparent system of communication focused on the impact of teacher input. By doing so FTMS East will improve the school environment and school performance.

To do so, we must define and implement a system that establishes a connection between staff input, the school improvement committees, and the leadership team. These connections will then be utilized to create a whole staff focus on improvement goals and success criteria; thus allowing for greater success for FTMS East.

Our Wondering

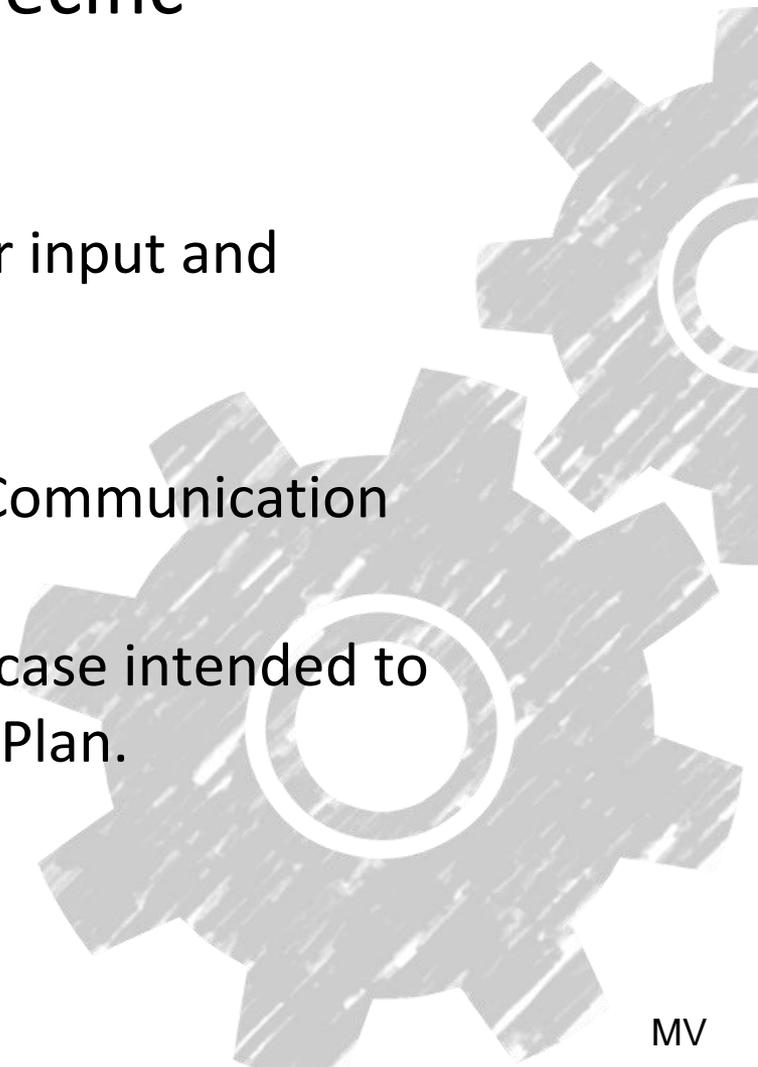
Can creating a transparent system of input and communication improve the overall school environment?



Our Actions

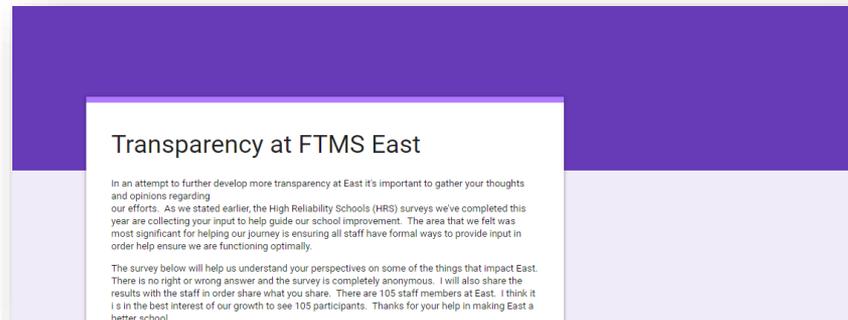
Our AR cycles consisted of 6 specific components:

1. Routine AR Team meetings
2. School Leadership conversation for input and feedback
3. Use of the HRS Survey
4. Development and use of a staff a Communication and Involvement Survey
5. Provide a School Committee Showcase intended to help show alignment to the PL221 Plan.



Our Actions

1. As a team we started our efforts by analyzing the data from HRS 1 Survey (Staff and Collaborative Culture).
2. Analysis and discussion led the AR team to the creation of a staff survey (Transparency at FTMS East).
3. The survey measured teacher involvement, effectiveness of our current leadership system, and committee effectiveness at East?



Our Actions

4. The AR team analyzed the results and then shared with the building leadership team and the school to discuss how to move forward.
5. The data showed a need for staff to better communicate systems of leadership and school improvement with staff..
6. As a result of the analysis we decided to use a forum to help explain committee connections, reiterate the role of department leads, and allow committees to share and celebrate their efforts.



Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected to help identify methods of improvement. This included:

- HRS Survey
- Staff Communication and Involvement Survey
 - Open Response Questions
 - Selected Response Questions
- Building Leadership Meetings
- Staff Meeting & Committee Presentation
 - Connection to School Improvement Plan

Our Data: HRS Survey

- Leading Indicator 1.5 was clearly our lowest area, and the one area we felt would provide the most impactful on school improvement.

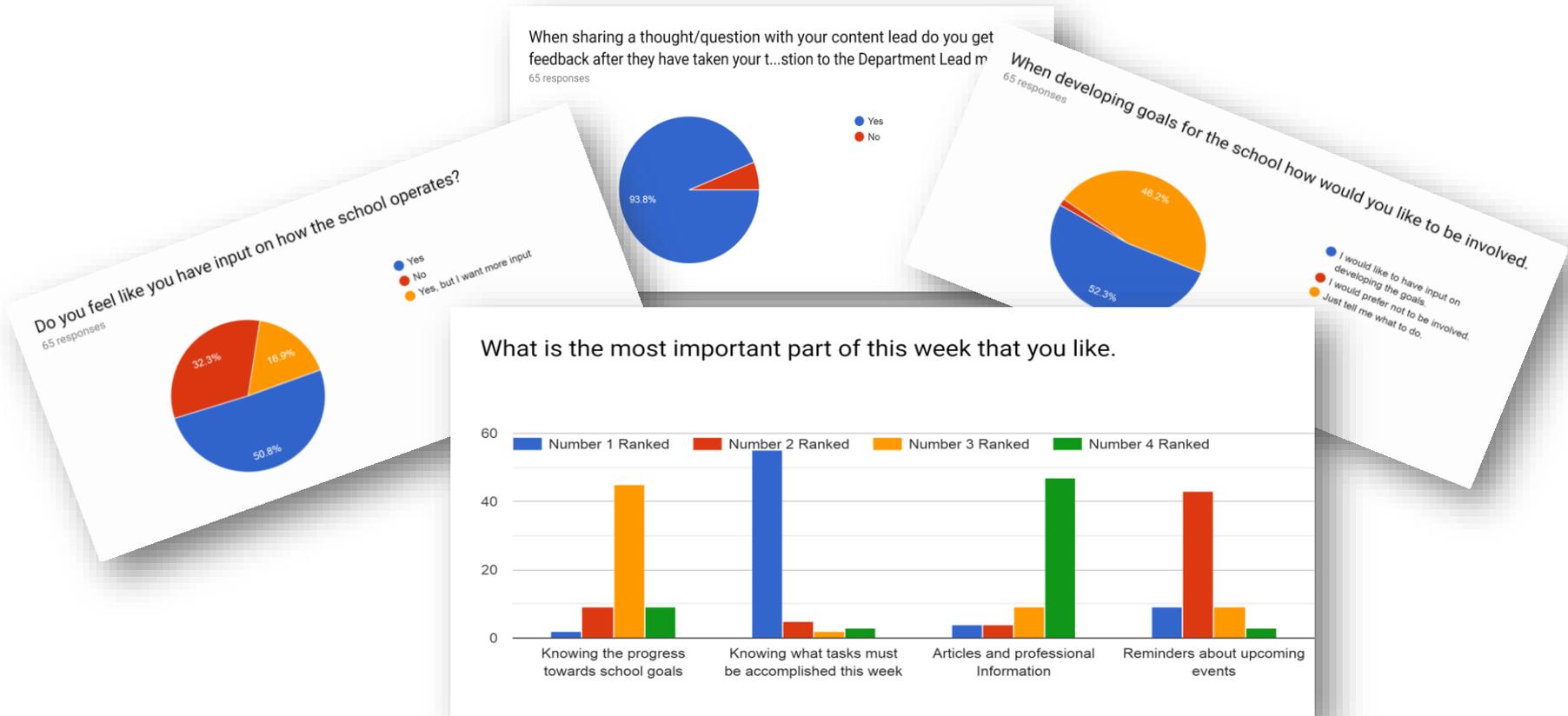
Leading Indicator 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school.

Administrators 1.5

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Count
1	Data collection systems are in place to collect opinion data from teachers and staff regarding the optimal functioning of our school.	3.00	4.00	3.33	0.47	3
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4	The manner in which opinion data from teachers and staff are used is transparent.	2.00	3.00	2.67	0.47	3
5	Our school improvement team regularly provides input and feedback about our school's improvement plan.	2.00	4.00	3.00	0.82	3

Our Data: Staff Communication and Involvement Survey

The development of the Transparency Survey was intended to identify the strengths and weakness of the current leadership systems. This included admin and department lead communication and the impact of the school improvement committees.



Data Collection: Staff Meeting Agenda

- Staff Meetings were utilized to demonstrate a connection between school improvement committees and the school's PL221 plan.

Components of a School Improvement Plan (PL221)

The state of Indiana requires the following components in the mandated PL221 plan. This plan is utilized to guide the school through improvement.

- Specific Areas Identified where Improvement is needed.
- Professional Development Narrative
 - Strategies, Programs, Services, and Activities
- Provisions to Maximize Parental Participation
- Provisions to Maintain a Safe and Disciplined Learning Environment
- Provisions for the Coordination of Technology Initiatives
- Cultural Competency

Data Collection: Staff Meeting Agenda



Components of a School Improvement Plan (PL221)

Provisions to Maintain a Safe and Disciplined Learning Environment

- **School Environment Committee**
- **Wellness Committee**
- **Social Committee**

Provisions for the Coordination of Techn

- **Building Tech Committee**

Cultural Competency

Components of a School Improvement Plan (PL221)

Professional Development Narrative

Strategies, Programs, Services, and Activities

Provisions to Maximize Parental Participation

- **Student and Family Success**
- **Parent and Community Outreach**

Data Collection: School Improvement Committee Presentations



Providing the staff with an opportunity to see how their committee, and other committees, impact the improvement of our school was an imperative piece to create the connection between committee work and the PL221 Plan.

Our Data: Teacher Qualitative Input

Understanding the feelings of the teacher's was important. Three clear areas were identified as wanting more input: Scheduling, Discipline, Curriculum

Teacher Quotes:

- “Things that have direct impact on the classroom that administrators are too far removed from to have adequate awareness of their actual impact.”
- “It would be helpful to be able to give input when changes are being made that directly impact teachers/departments.”
- “Building safety, sometimes procedures need a different perspective depending on location of classroom.”
- “The problem is we feel we give input and then someone else makes the decision that doesn't seem to match the input teachers gave. (Since this building opened.)”
- “It would be nice to have more say (or feedback) in how school discipline/behaviors are consistently handled.”

Our Discoveries

Learning Statement One:

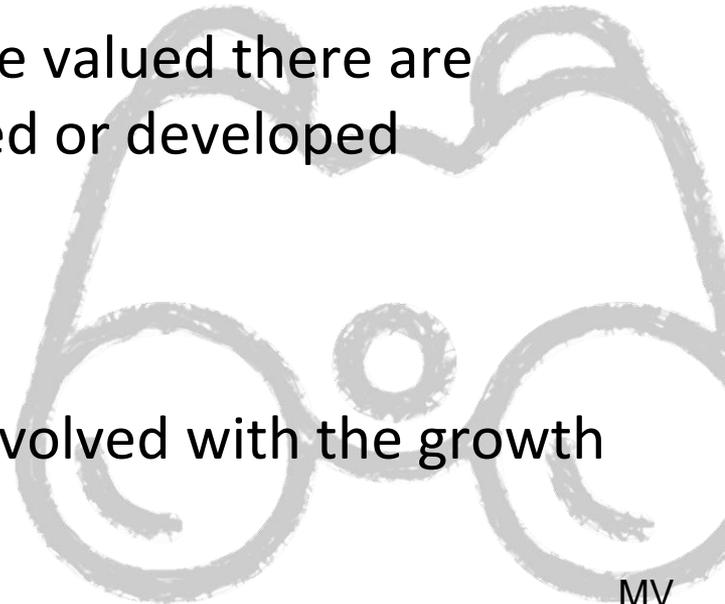
FTMS East teachers understand and coexist with the communication strategies of building leadership and department leadership.

Learning Statement Two:

While most of the schools committee's are valued there are clearly committees that need to be created or developed further.

Learning Statement Three:

FTMS East Teachers want to be directly involved with the growth and improvement of our school.



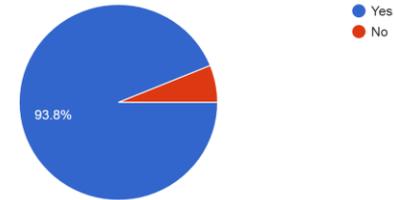
Our Discoveries

Learning Statement One:

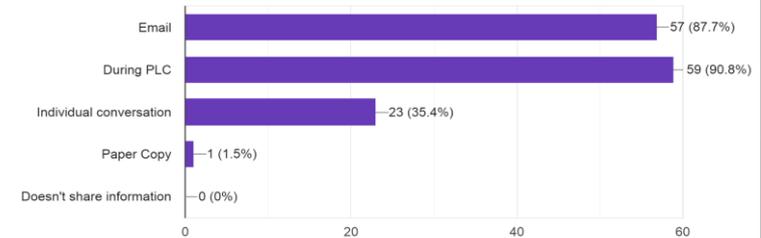
FTMS East teachers understand and approve the communication methods of building leadership and department leadership.

- 93% of teachers at East feel their avenues of communication are effective. Additionally, the method in which it is shared is consistent in the building.
- Weekly communication by the administration is most appreciated when the teacher's weekly tasks and events are a prioritized.

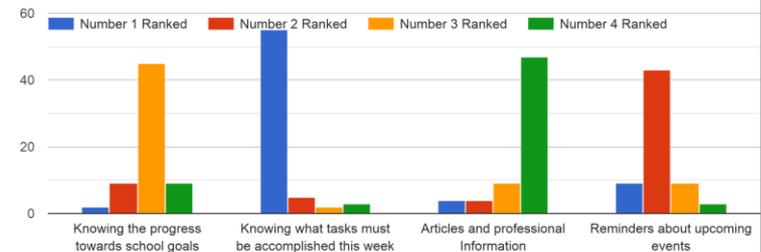
When sharing a thought/question with your content lead do you get feedback after they have taken your t...stion to the Department Lead meeting?
65 responses



How does your department lead share information with you following a Building Leadership meetings?
65 responses



What is the most important part of this week that you like.



“School Climate Committee - focus on staff PD improving teacher/student interactions and relationships to improve learning, motivation, inclusion, and reduce defiance and disrespect”

Our Discoveries

I feel like the committees we have are doing what needs to be done.

Learning Statement Two:

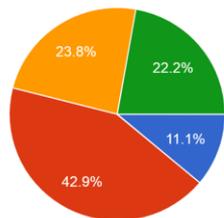
While most of the school’s committees are valued, there are clearly committees that need to be created or further developed. The statements left by teachers made this need clear:

School Climate Committee - focus on staff PD improving teacher/student interactions and relationships to improve learning, motivation, inclusion, and reduce defiance and disrespect

- Teachers appreciate our current committee effort. It helps them be involved.
- There are committees that teachers feel are missing from our current efforts.

How soon would you like to know about building initiatives or changes?

63 responses



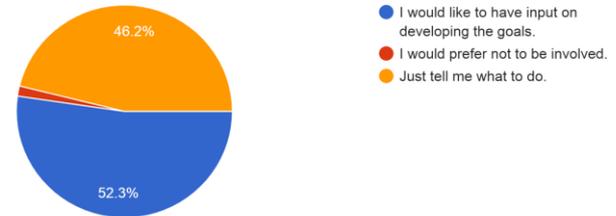
- "I want to come up with the ideas."
- "I would prefer just giving input and someone else making the plans."
- "I want to help develop and monitor the plan."
- "Just tell me what I have to do."

Our Discoveries

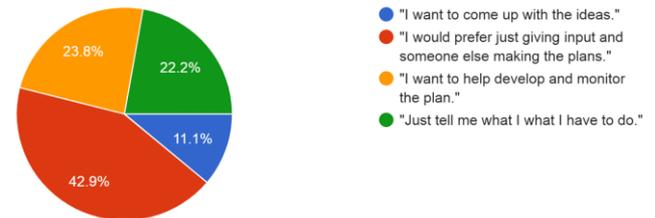
Learning Statement Three:
FTMS East Teachers want to be directly involved with the growth and improvement of our school.

- 70% of the teachers want to help develop the goals for the school.
- A majority of teachers currently feel like they have input.

When developing goals for the school how would you like to be involved.
65 responses



How soon would you like to know about building initiatives or changes?
63 responses



“It would be helpful to be able to give input when changes are being made that directly impact teachers/departments”

“It would be nice to have more say (or feedback) in how school discipline/behaviors are consistently handled.”

Where We Are Heading Next

ACTION STEP 1:

Realign and develop 2019-2020 FTMS East committees to more closely aligned with the PL221 expectation and teacher needs.

This AR cycle has shown a clear need in our school's improvement process. Better understanding our teacher's needs can help us better accomplish our school goals and school improvement. As a result of our efforts we see the aforementioned actions as necessary for a successful 2019-2020

Where We Are Heading Next

ACTION STEP 2:

Extend the building leadership team to include committee leaders. This will help ensure our leadership efforts are better aligned with school goals.

Understanding the teachers' emphasis on wanting to be involved in the development of school goals and efforts, it will be important to ensure committee leadership is represented in the school leadership team. This will help building a more holistic approach to school leadership.

Where We Are Heading Next

ACTION STEP 3:

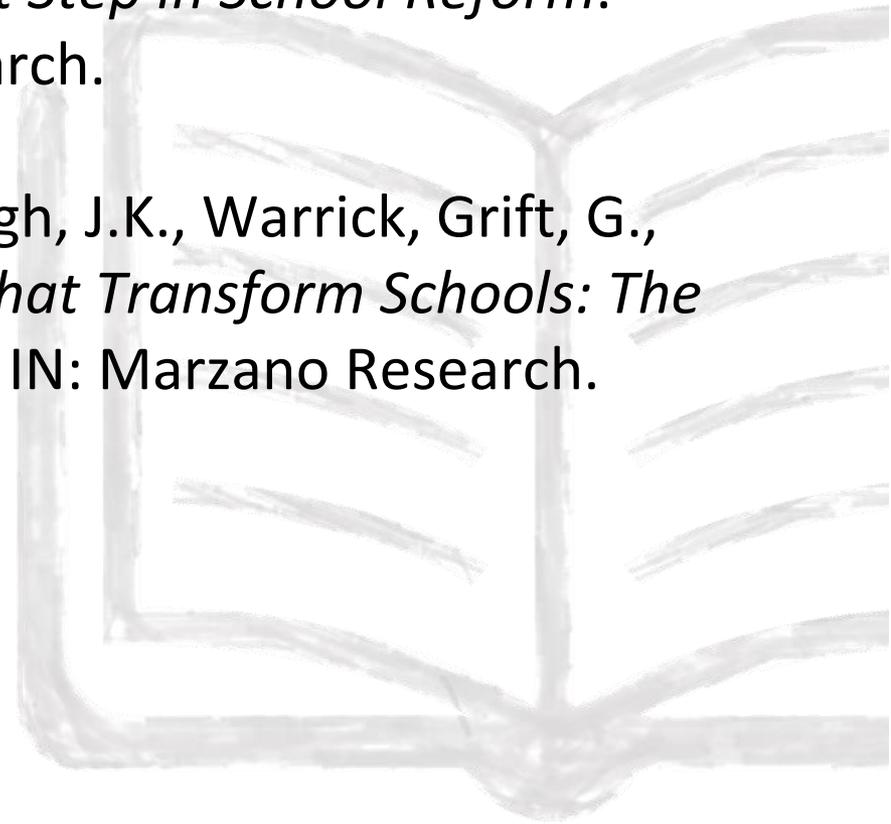
Utilize the teachers, and the teacher leaders, to develop goals for the 2019-2020 school year. This will ensure all teachers have an opportunity to contribute to the growth and success of FTMS East.

Teacher emphasis on being involved in the development of school goals and efforts is an imperative catalyst to including committee representation in the school leadership team.

Bibliography

Marzano, R.J., Warrick, P. Simms, J.A., (2014). *A Handbook for High Reliability Schools: The Next Step in School Reform*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.

Marzano, R.J., Heflebower, T., Oegh, J.K., Warrick, Grift, G., (2016). *A Collaborative Teams That Transform Schools: The Next Step in PLC's*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.



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Background Leading to Our Inquiry (Slide 2-3)

FTMS East experienced a leadership change in the middle of the 2017-2018 school year. During the transition our new superintendent utilized the talent of leaders in our district to elevate the talent in our central administration. These promotions created a shift in building leadership and provided the building principals a chance to increase their professional responsibilities. This leadership transition afforded me the opportunity to move to a larger middle school with new opportunities.

As I began my new role, concerns regarding staff involvement in school improvement were quickly identified. These concerns were further validated throughout the remainder of the school year. Beginning the 2018-2019 school year I had the opportunity to invite building leaders to IPLI to help develop High Reliability School. This work began with the first HRS survey focusing on Safe and Collaborative Culture. This survey more accurately validated the following concern: Leading Indicator 1.5: Teachers and staff have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school. This information along with other internal surveys and leadership collaboration confirmed the initial 2017-2018 concern regarding staff involvement.

The Purpose of Our Inquiry (Slide 4)

Therefore, the purpose of our action inquiry was to create a more transparent system of communication focused on the impact of teacher input. By doing so FTMS East will improve the school environment and school performance. To do so, we must define and implement a system that establishes a connection between staff input, the school improvement committees, and the building leadership team. These connections will then be utilized to create a whole staff focus on improvement goals and success criteria; thus allowing for greater success for FTMS East.

Our Wondering (Slide 5)

Can creating a transparent system of input and communication improve the overall school environment?

Our Actions (Slide 7-9)

We utilized five (5) specific components needed to complete this AR cycle:

1. Routine AR Team Meetings

2. School Leadership Conversation for Input and Feedback
3. Use of the HRS Survey
4. Development and Use of a Staff Communication and Involvement Survey
5. Provide a School Committee Showcase intended to help show alignment to the PL221 Plan.

As a team we started our efforts by analyzing the data from HRS 1 Survey (Staff and Collaborative Culture). The data uncovered two important questions to help drive our process:

1. Why do people feel like they're not involved in the current system?
2. Do our current systems of communication help our staff understand actions associated with school improvement?

The analysis and discussion of our AR team led us to the creation of a staff survey (Transparency at FTMS East). We wanted the survey to measure teacher involvement interest, effectiveness of our current leadership's system of communication, teacher awareness understanding the current leadership system, and identifying committees needing improvement at East?

Upon the completion of the survey the AR team came together to analyze the results. This data was the shared with the building leadership team and the school. The analysis helped determine it would be beneficial to highlight how we currently provide opportunities for staff input. We wanted to ensure staff understands the role of the department lead, understands the roles of school committees, and finally understands committee connections to our PL221 plan.

As a result of the analysis it was decided to use a presentation forum to better explain committee connections, reiterate the role of department leads, and allow committees to share and celebrate their efforts.

Data Collection (Slide 9-13)

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected to help identify methods of improvement. In order to collect both components, the team pulled from HRS Survey 1 and a Staff Communication and Involvement Survey. This second survey included an opportunity for staff to participate in open response questions and selected response questions. Additionally, the team collected qualitative data from building leadership meetings, the survey, a committee presentation, and staff meetings that focused on connecting staff efforts to PL221 plan.

Our Data (Slides 10-15)

The initial piece of data that started our wondering was the HRS 1 Data. More specifically, Leading Indicator 1.5. This was clearly our lowest area and the one area we felt would provide the most impactful opportunities.

This survey was followed by the development of a Staff Communication and Involvement Survey. The survey was intended to identify the strengths and weakness of the current leadership systems and provide an opportunity to help move use towards a more transparent system. The survey included inquiries on admin and department lead communication and inquiries on the impact of the school improvement committees.

Additionally, information collected from staff meetings were utilized to help demonstrate a connection between school improvement committees and the school's PL221 plan. These meetings helped provide staff with an opportunity to see how our committees interact with the improvement of our school. This was an imperative piece to help create the connection between committee work and the PL221 Plan.

Furthermore, understanding the feeling of the teachers was important. In the collection of this information three clear areas were identified as wanting more opportunity for input: scheduling, discipline, and curriculum. The teacher said they wanted to know more about *"Things that have direct impact on the classroom that administrators are too far removed from to have adequate awareness of their actual impact."* Perhaps the most impactful statement made by staff was the following: *"The problem is we feel we give input and then someone else makes the decision that doesn't seem to match the input teachers gave. (Since this building opened.)"* These statements, along with many others provided important insight into the needs of the staff.

Our Discoveries (Slide 16-19)

Understanding where the teachers want to focus their efforts was imperative for moving forward. The teacher identified three committees as having the most value: a discipline committee was recommended, instruction and PD committee was recommended, and a technology committee. While there were three that had clear needs, most teachers felt the current school committees are sufficient. Because of this information we learned the following:

Learning Statement One (1):

FTMS East teachers understand and approve the communication methods of building leadership and department leadership.

- 93% of teachers at East feel their avenues of communication are effective. Additionally, the method in which it is shared is consistent in the building.
- Weekly communication by the administration is most appreciated when the teacher's weekly tasks and events are a prioritized.

Learning Statement Two (2):

While most of the school's committees are valued, there are clearly committees that need to be created or further developed. The statements left by teachers made this need clear:

- Teachers appreciate our current committee effort. It helps them be involved.
- There are committees that teachers feel are missing from our current efforts.

Learning Statement Three (3):

FTMS East Teachers want to be directly involved with the growth and improvement of our school.

- 70% of the teachers want to help develop the goals for the school.
- A majority of teachers currently feel like they have input.

Where We Are Headed Next (Slide 20-22)

As a result of these discoveries we have concluded the several actions are imperative for our school improvement. The ability for East to become more successful with creating a safe and collaborative culture, and ultimately to a high reliability school, will need the following actions to occur:

- **ACTION STEP 1:**

Realign and develop 2019-2020 FTMS East committees to more closely aligned with the PL221 expectation and teacher needs.

This AR cycle has shown a clear need in our school's improvement process. Better understanding our teacher's needs can help us better accomplish our school goals and school improvement. As a result of our efforts we see the aforementioned actions as necessary for a successful 2019-2020

- **ACTION STEP 2:**

Extend the building leadership team to include committee leaders. This will help ensure our leadership efforts are better aligned with school goals.

Understanding the teachers' emphasis on wanting to be involved in the development of school goals and efforts, it will be important to ensure committee leadership is represented in the school leadership team. This will help building a more holistic approach to school leadership.

- **ACTION STEP 3:**

Utilize the teachers, and the teacher leaders, to develop goals for the 2019-2020 school year. This will ensure all teachers have an opportunity to contribute to the growth and success of FTMS East.

Teacher emphasis on being involved in the development of school goals and efforts is an imperative catalyst to including committee representation in the school leadership team.

Bibliography (Slide 23)

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