

What Have I Done?

One Principal's Focus on Learning

Slow Down...
Think – Do – Think Again



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Background Leading to this Inquiry

- **RATIONALE:** Using the information and data from the IPLI Leadership Survey, Supervisor Evaluation from Dr. White, NPUSC Leadership Survey Results, IPLI Cohort Conversation and IPLI Information and Presentations, I determined that my area of focus would center on:
Standard #1 Vision and
Standard #2 Instructional Leadership.

Purpose of This Inquiry

- Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to give evidence (or lack there of) regarding the daily tasks associated with my principalship. Do I make a daily difference in the Learning for ALL Students?

My Wondering

- **GUIDING QUESTION:** As Prairie View's Principal, I am pulled in a variety of different directions everyday.

How do I focus on our mission?

How do I ENSURE HIGH LEVELS of LEARNING for ALL STUDENTS?



**Our Mission is to
Ensure High Levels of
Learning for ALL
Students**

My Actions

- **THE PLAN:**

1. Beginning in January 2019, I will reflect on the tasks and events that surround my day as Principal.

2. I will look for data to support (or refute) my goal of ensuring high levels of learning for ALL students.

3. For 5 days each month January to April, I will share a reflection regarding my guiding question.

4. The qualitative findings will be shared with IPLI Staff and Cohort Members.

Data Collection

- To collect data, I kept a daily journal detailing tasks associated with my craft.
- I analyzed the tasks into three categories:
 - A) Ensured Learning for All Students.
 - B) Ensured Learning for some students.
 - C) Waste of time (ie; nobody is learning anything from this task or event).
- Provide details regarding tasks that did Ensure Learning for All Students.

My Data

January

- 7, 2019: Today is a teacher workday. I'm not allowed to schedule meetings or take up time with planning or problem solving. Nobody said anything about celebrating! I spent the day celebrating with teachers! We cheered for growth and improvement. We celebrated skills, attendance, attitude, anything really that shows that students are making progress. After some reflection, it became important to also recognize how teachers are growing too. I need to remember that while it is "all about the kids", sometimes it's about the adults too. We can all grow and change. We can all improve our skills, attitudes and "attending" to our profession. There is a lot to improve upon BUT there is also a lot to celebrate!
~ The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate. Oprah Winfrey
- 8, 2019: Yesterday, the teachers developed and printed report cards for my review. They will be sent home later in the week. I began comparing the student grades with the NWEA reports for MOY. There should be a correlation between how the students are scoring on the assessment and what their report cards show. There are a few cases where student report cards do not reflect the same strengths or weaknesses that the assessment shows. Parents become confused and angry when it comes time for remediation (summer school, tutoring, Title I classes). No one likes those kinds of surprises. In a few cases, it appears that teachers could not provide rationale for the disparity between report cards and NWEA. Individual conferences will ensue.
~ People are like teabags. We don't know our true strength until we are in hot water! Unknown

My Data

- 9, 2019: Staff Meeting today. Our staff meetings feature professional development each month. This is very different from my early days as an administrator. The agendas were filled with “administrivia”: What will we do about gum chewers? What do we do for field trip in the spring? What are ways we can torture students that don’t do homework? In my mind, a waste of time and breath. I began modeling reading aloud to students by selecting anchor texts to read to the staff. Great idea right? I got a grievance from the teachers union. I provided Mike Schmoker and Doug Reeves articles to read and discuss. The articles focused on areas of improvement for our staff. Great Idea right? I received another grievance. (Some) teachers were angry that I expected them to learn anything. They were offended that I had the nerve to ask them to discuss best practice strategies or plan for improved instruction. NOW my staff looks forward to the opportunity to meet and discuss best practice strategies. They crave time when they can meet together to plan – do- review ideas that they have determined to get the most from and for their students.

~ *Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.* Nelson Mandela

- 10, 2019: Special Education Annual Case Review. I attend each case conference for my special education students. I love these meetings! Weird for a principal to say that they love any meeting... but I do! This is an opportunity for teachers to share with parents all of the ways that their student is growing in their learning. It is also a place for parents to help us plan for the “whole” child. I enjoy some deep thinking about the areas where a student is not making progress. It is like a puzzle. What changes can be made? Additions? Deletions? Sometimes the most subtle changes make a big difference. It is amazing how intelligent minds can harness the power of changes (and sometimes perseverance) to improve learning for one child. I’m sure that there are professions where there are time / success ratios would make what educators do seem like a waste of time. That we’d get a “better bang for our buck” if we focused on more students. But.... It made a difference to that one (student)!

~ It made a difference to that one. (Starfish on the beach) Unknown



My Data

- 11, 2019: Today report cards went home. I review all report cards for performance and growth. I compare the report cards to the interim reports to make sure that students are receiving the benefits of tier two and tier three instruction. It is amazing though, every year at third quarter, there are parents that ask for special education testing because they are unhappy with the scores. They do not attend Rtl Conferences, they do not help at home, they are the first ones to keep their children home if they are too tired to get them up. I remind myself that we have the children for the majority of their waking hours. I remind myself that I have little affect on the behavior at home. So I pray that all of the good work we are doing does not get undone at home. Prayer Works!

~ Prayer is putting ourselves in the hands of God. Mother Theresa



My Data

February

- 13, 2019: Schedule for the Day =
 - 6:40 = Parent Meeting to discuss negative student behavior. Parent has to go to work so meeting is scheduled early. Student attends too. This is a win-win. The student doesn't like getting up so early and completing community service with me. I'm sure he will make better choices in the future.
 - 8:00 = Late start Day. The students come 45 minutes later each Wednesday so that the staff and I can work together to improve our craft. Today's topic? Common Formative Assessments.
 - 9:45 = ILEARN Load Test until 10:15
 - 10:30 = Parent Meeting to discuss student performance (Rtl)
 - 12:00 = Case Conference for Special Education
 - 1:00 = Meeting at Central Office re: Power School Upgrades
 - 2:00 = Meeting at Central Office re: Title I Monthly Meeting
 - 3:10 = Student Council Meeting
 - 5:00 = Exercise Class
 - 7:30 = Church
 - 9:00 = Dinner & Bed
- I'm sure that I did SOMETHING to make sure that all students learned today.... I'm tired!

~ I don't stop when I'm tired. I stop when I'm done.

Marilyn Monroe



My Data

- 21, 2019: I have been a principal for 21 years. All but two of those years have been in a Title I school. My current school is one of two Title I schools in our district. There is a lot of extra work to do for a Title I principal. Meetings, paperwork, compliance, planning, audits, events, parent support and student support. However, along with all of the extra work, comes extra funding. I have a philosophy that I have carried with me since the beginning: “My Students Need People, Not Things”. I have chosen (along with our staff and parents) to use the funding to employ additional people to make teaching and learning more effective.
~ *Young people need models, not critics. John Wooden*
- 27, 2019: PTO stands for Parent Teacher Organization. We do have a strong group. However, there are no teachers that attend. I hate to ask them to attend one more thing when they give 110% all day. I use my slot on the agenda to talk about how parents positively impact student learning. I teach about reading strategies, technology enhanced learning, Ready Math, spelling as a vocabulary lesson instead of memorizing lists. We discuss how money is spent on students, schedule fun events for kids and families, and learn about standardized testing strategies. “High Levels of Learning” for parents is important too!
~ *The greatest happiness is family happiness. Joyce Brothers*

My Data

March

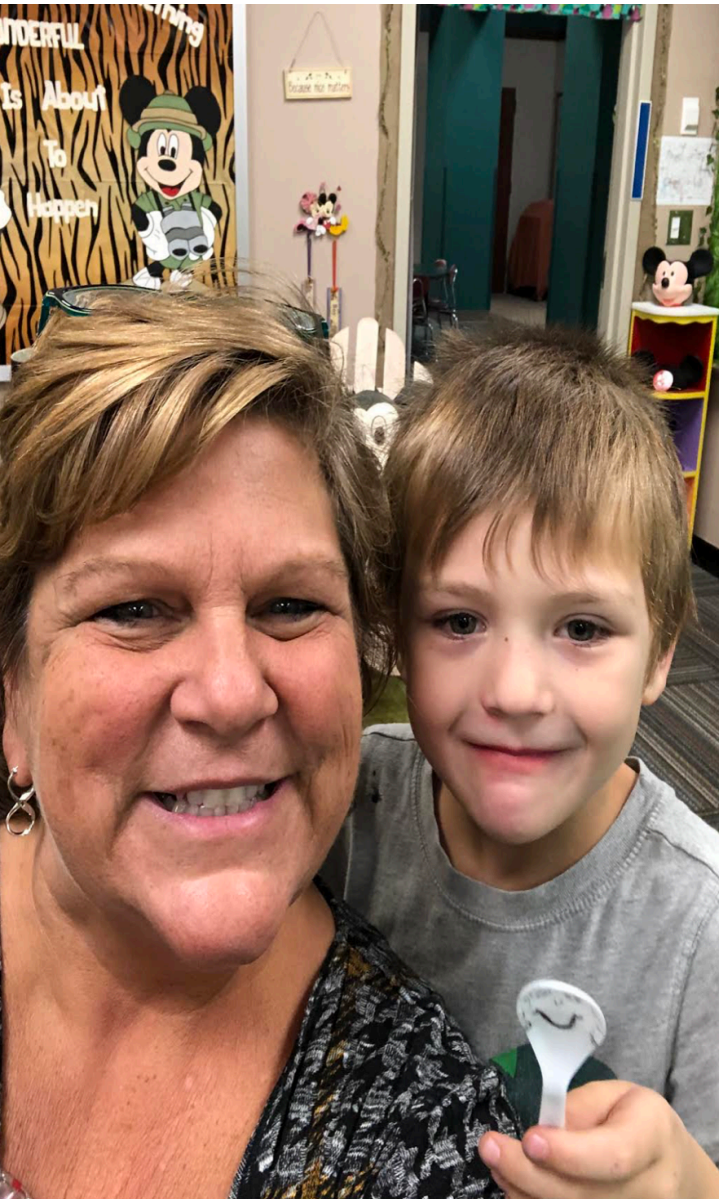
- 1, 2019: New Prairie is a 1 to 1 district. This means that all of our students have their own iPads assigned to them K through 12. The iPads contain the reading series, math series, science series, and many, many programs chosen specifically for each grade level and even each student according to their needs. I work cooperatively with the district Technology Director, Curriculum Director and my iCoach to determine what apps and programs are available for students that struggle with learning or who need to be challenged. The resources need to be aligned with our SIP and improvement goals. Budgeting is key! Sometimes it feels like Sophie's Choice. Who gets what they need and who goes without. I wish I could win the lottery! \$\$\$\$\$
~ *Money is not the only answer, but it makes a difference. Barak Obama*
- 11, 2019: PLC stands for Professional Learning Community. Our district is growing toward this model of planning, intervention and assessment for our students. It is where the Mission: Our Purpose Is To Ensure High Levels Of Learning For ALL Students! This morning the "Guiding Coalition" met to continue planning professional development for staff members that have not experienced the summer retreat in Lincolnshire Illinois. This July my whole staff will attend. The power of this movement will allow all of us to "pull" in the same direction with the same expectations and voice. The work is hard – but it is so good. I am already seeing and hearing teachers question each other about what is the BEST way for kids. My heart is full!
~ *Clear Eyes, Full Hearts, Can't Lose! Friday Night Lights*

My Data



- 18, 2019: This is one of my favorite days! I get to travel to Valparaiso to meet with my IPLI Team. We are very different leaders. Because of this we are great supports for each other. My teammates are smart, dedicated, witty and they challenge my thinking. After 21 years as a school leader and 29 in education, one might think that they have nothing to learn. I am a witness to the opposite. One member is the captain of a charter school. Another is the head of a pre-school consortium. Two “amazing” women lead large high schools with thousands of students and hundreds of staff in an era where social media issues and teen pressures abound. They are heroes of their day! Two of us lead successful elementary schools. We know that they are not successful by accident. And then there is Jack... the smiling, proud, supporter of us all. When I think I’m not enough, he reminds me that I am more than enough. ~ *We rise by lifting others.* Robert Ingersoll

My Data



APRIL

- 1 - 5, 2019: How did I ensure high levels of learning for ALL students this week????? Well, I took naps. I watched the sun rise in the Bahamian sky. I swam in the green ocean next to stingrays. I drank fruity alcoholic drinks and laughed with friends. I enjoyed drifting along the lazy river in the pool. I allowed the sun to soak into my skin and my soul. I smiled all day long as I thought about students and teachers and support staff that make my life so full. It has taken me a long time to realize that I cannot give fully to others if I don't take care of myself. What would there be left to give? I have missed so many things all in the name of perfection. One of my superintendents once told me that I had to learn when to say, "it is finished". He told me that the need for perfection was a thief of my time and my joy. He is a wise man. Why does it take so long for me to listen and to learn? I know that I am always a student. I LOVE to learn, to discover, to puzzle things out. Perhaps that is why I love going to school everyday. It is my JOY and my Passion to make sure that ALL students are learning at High Levels everyday.
.... sometimes we are learning how to behave properly on the bus so we talk to the spoon that looks like the principal so we remember to sit in our seat and be safe.
.... sometimes we are learning to care for our neighbors and friends who have so much wisdom and very few visitors to share their stories with.
.... sometimes we need to remember that no matter how long we've been at a goal, there is beauty in the adventure.
~ *In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun.*
Mary Poppins

My Discoveries

- Learning Statement **One**: I am engaged in tasks that Ensure High Levels of Learning for ALL Students.
- Learning Statement **Two**: Journaling everyday is not going to happen for this principal.
- Learning Statement **Three**: While my day is full of tasks and decisions that impact learning. There are also many tasks that have no impact at all and seem to be time suckers. That may be my next inquiry. How to minimize tasks with no positive impact on student learning.

Where Am I Heading Next

- I am heading in the right direction! I believe that using the PLC model in our schools and district has allowed us to shift focus from teaching (adults) to learning (students). In August 2019, my entire staff will have visited Lincolnshire, Illinois. We will be ready to understand the intricacies of the components of PLCs in our school and continue to hone our craft to make sure that ALL students are learning at high levels. I plan to have my entire staff ask themselves the reflection question each day on their way home: What did I do to ensure High Levels of Learning for ALL Students?



Bibliography

- DuFour, Dufour, Eaker, Many and Mattos. (2016). *Learning By Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work.*