

2022-11-15_75_The Flywheel Part 1_FINAL audio

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Leadership really is a journey. Oftentimes, we begin that journey by being sucked into the black hole of urgency. And then we're able to start to break away from that pole of that urgent gravity by implementing some strategically reactive processes. And eventually those processes give us the time and the ability to move into that phase of strategic leadership. That's that journey is actually the topic of this week's daily emails. So if you're subscribing to our daily email, then you'll know what I'm talking about. And if you're not subscribing, I guess you can either go and subscribe, you can go to my website and check out the blog, or you can wait for five for Friday this week, in which we'll recap that.

01:05 :

But why are we starting this podcast episode talking about the journey? Because this episode is going to be a deep dive into what's possible. When you get to that third stage of the journey, when you become a strategic leader. This is what's going to be possible. Hello colleagues, and welcome to the Assistant Principal podcast. I'm your host, Frederick Buskey. The goal of this podcast is to help improve life and leadership for assistant principals. And I guess the secret might be out that other school leaders can benefit from the show as well.

01:45 :

This is a content focused episode and this content stands on its own, but we'll also be taking a deeper dive into this top into today's topics in an upcoming issue of Quadrant 2, our bimonthly micro journal. Also, members of our apex community can expect to get some support on implementing some of these ideas that we're looking at today and then adapting them to their own unique contexts.

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You can learn more about Apex and Quadrant 2 at frederickbuskey.com backslash the assistant principal. Remember that there are four principles of strategic leadership. Strategic leaders. Place purpose above urgency. They focused on identifying problems rather than treating symptoms. They make sure that they're making progress and not just taking action. And then finally and most most importantly is that they focus on developing people, not checking off tasks. Those first three principles of strategic leadership, purpose problems, and progress are really only important because they're the things that help us get to that fourth, principle which is developing people.

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And today's show is all about developing people. We're going to take some concepts that you've heard me talk about. And weave them together and show you what the complete package can look like. The first concept that you'll hear me talk about is the four patterns of observation, which we covered back in episode 65 We'll touch a little bit on last week's episode on Professional Development, in which I talked about the idea that teachers really should be the drivers of their own professional development.

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And we'll hit on what I think is the most important of all the concepts, which is the flywheel. And we've never really fully broken down the flywheel. We did some conversation with Doctor Melissa Burns way back in Episode 32 which aired in June. But this episode will be the first time that it really. Break down the flywheel with specific examples and walk you through that process. And this is what

I'm most passionate about, so I'm really excited for this episode. Ok, so let's dive in. We'll begin with a scenario. I'm in a middle school middle school assistant principal. It's mid November and we're noticing an uptick in student referrals, specifically for students talking and not being in their seats.

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We begin to take a little bit deeper dive into the data and what we find is that the increases are happening in specific classrooms and three of these classrooms are staffed with early career teachers. In our weekly instructional leadership team meeting. Which, by the way, we broke down in episode 49 the ILT, back in August. In our instructional leadership team meeting. We decide that we need to we need to observe and see what's going on in these classrooms, so we commit to doing a series of performative observations. During transition times in the classrooms of those early career teachers.

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Now remember, performative observations are for our benefit. So we're not gathering any hard data. We're not trying to improve teaching. We just want more information. We want to find out what's happening. This is for our benefit. Thus, it's a performative observation, and we can communicate that clearly to teachers so they know that we're not going in there to judge or criticize them. So we do our performative observations and in our next regularly scheduled ILT meeting, which focuses specifically on instruction and for which we have a structured agenda, which was also part of Episode 49 the ILT.

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We have a structured agenda and as part of that agenda we talk about what we saw overall with these three teachers that are struggling with transitions. So in our discussion, the big thing that jumps out is that there's not any evidence that there's beginning class procedures in these three early career teachers classrooms. So we decided to go back and talk with those teachers as a group to let them know what we've seen and see if there's a way that we can support them.

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At the same time, our instructional coach is going to dig through their resources and look at specific procedures for transitions or excuse me, for beginning class routines and. She will pull that together so that we have a nice clean, quality set procedure for how to begin class and we have that ready to support those teachers. So we go to the teachers and. Use the data from the increase in discipline referrals. And we can just take that data and and aggregate it. So we're not focusing on any specific teacher, but we can show them how this block of three teachers has many more referrals happening, that there's been an increase and that it's more than what we're seeing in some of the other classrooms.

07:43 :

We can also just have the conversation about what we've seen, but we really need to ask them how they're doing. And that conversation could go a different way because two different ways teachers could be reluctant to. Express that there's anything going wrong. Or they might say yes. The kids are driving me crazy and I don't know what to do. Which is then an easy entry point for us to be able to say, OK, well, we think we can help. Here's what we noticed. That at the beginning of class, it's taking a long time to get everybody settled in. And teachers will probably yes. They don't do what I ask them to do. It's taking too long, they're talking too much, and it's really creating a bad situation.

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Ok, we think we can help you with that. What we'd like to do is to work with you on establishing an beginning class procedure and we'll give you all the support you need to implement that and then we'll give you the follow up support to see if it works, and if it doesn't work we'll adjust course. But this should take about a week to do. I mean you guys in on that. And in tying back to last week's

podcast where I talked about teachers need to drive their own professional development in most cases. So if we have decent teachers, if these teachers are, you know, have good potential, then they probably are aware that they're struggling with this and having this conversation and and sharing some of the data with them, they're probably going to want to engage in establishing these classroom procedures.

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If we have someone who is really resistant but also really struggling as a teacher and just saying no, I don't have any problems, that's a case where we just say no, I'm sorry, this is what we're going to work on. You're going to do it this way and we're going to take you through the process and then once we've got that done, then we'll talk and you can share with us how you want to grow.

09:49 :

But if we've got a teacher that's resistant to growth. At that point, then, we step in and we'd be more directive, but in most cases. We can collaborate with teachers to identify what they need and. If we have a teacher, one of these early career teachers that says no, this is not my problem, I have this problem over here. Then we may need to back off of. Establishing the opening class procedure and help them in the area they want because if they want help in a different area, but we force them into what we want to do, we're now working against against them and now we're not being supportive.

10:31 :

So even if opening class procedure is the most important thing that they really need to get it right, if they're convinced there's something else, we need to go figure out how to help them in that area and once we do that and. We help add some value to what they're doing, then we can go back and revisit opening class procedure. And now we've built some trust and we've built some credibility and we're going to be able to get to that.

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So when I talk about teachers driving their own professional development, this is what I mean, right? It's a negotiation. And sometimes there are few cases where we're just going to tell people, you need to take care of this. There are a lot of cases that are going to be more collaborative where we can say, hey, we've seen something, here's what. We're seeing here is what this looks like. We have some ideas that might help you.

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Let's talk about what that might look like and and how we can do that. And then in other cases, teachers say, no, I have something that's more of a priority to me that I want to work on. And then we say, OK, we're here to serve you and support your growth. You tell us what that is, we'll come up and we'll work together and we will help you get there. Sometimes we just have to leave, let go of our preconceived notions, we have to let go of what we think is the most important thing. So that's a bit of a digression about the whole conversation and the whole idea of how teachers drive their own professional development.

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Now we'll take it back to this specific case of our three early career teachers, who we've just done some performative observations. We've noticed that beginning of class procedures are really weak or completely absent. We've had that discussion with them. They've noticed the uptick in behaviors. They're frustrated with it as well. So now we're on the same page that we're gonna help them develop opening class procedures. Our instructional coach has already done a little bit of work in that and found out some good opening class procedures to work with them on.

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So the next thing then is that she's going to work with those teachers, teaching them what the

opening class procedure is. Now, maybe those teachers are going to go back and teach it themselves to their classrooms. Maybe they'll ask her for help, or they'll ask me or the principal for help. It that just depends, and that's totally up to them what kind of support they want and implementation. But implementation happens. We teach it to them, they go and they implement, and now we form.

13:03 :

We follow up with normative observations. Remember that normative observations are observations that follow up on group professional development. And so we're looking at what happens with the group. We're looking at fidelity of implementation to try to figure out, was our professional development successful? And if it was, where do we go next? If it wasn't, where do we go next? Those normative, that normative data is going to be aggregated, we're not going to disaggregate and show each teacher where they were within the group. We're just going to show the entire group together. Here's the aggregated data. In the ideal world backing up, we should do a normative observation before we implement the professional development in order to find out what the baseline is.

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But in this example, we didn't do that because it's the real world and we're busy. But after the professional development, we make sure that each of us principal APNIC get into each of the three teachers classrooms least one time and. As part of our preliminary work in our instructional leadership team meeting, we worked with the instructional coach to identify a very simple instrument that we can go and we can use to gather our follow-up data. And in the procedure, the three elements of the procedure are store your stuff, sit in your seat, and then begin writing based on a prompt that's posted on the board so.

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What we're doing is we're going to tally the number of students who successfully store their stuff, who successfully sit down, who successfully then begin engaging in the writing prompt. We're also going to tally the number of times that the teachers reinforce positive student behavior. We have also taught them that the best way to prompt a student back into the procedure is to ask a question and say, hey, what is the next step? The procedure where should you be in the procedure now? What are your classmates doing? So we want to reinforce with questions, so we're taking notes on that.

15:27 :

And we're also going to take notes on the quality of the prompt. We could also set a timer and time how long it actually takes kids to get seated. So these are the things we're looking at store sit, right? Reinforcement comments and questions asked. We have three teachers. We have parent, GAIL and Bishop and. We do. Each of us does an observation. So we wind up with three observations for each of these teachers. And when we look at the aggregated data, this is after we've done the professional development. What we find is that. Students stored their stuff appropriately 167 out of 210 times. But we also notice in that data that parents class was almost 90, almost 100 %.

16:23 :

Bishop's class was 100 %, but in Gail's class. There were only a there was only a success rate of less than 50 % of the kids actually storing their stuff in appropriate way. On time. When it comes to sitting. We had 195 out of 210 aggregated score, so one ninety five observations. We had 210 successful performances of students sitting down and it was again universal and parents class and abishov's class and better engals but still struggling. In writing. We had 132 Out of 210 performances that were successful. So 132 is really the the worst area so far. And what we found is that in parents class on the three observations, one of the observations was zero out of the 23 kids were writing, the other two was ten out of the 23 students were writing.

17:29 :

Gail was a little bit better where we had 1216 and 16 out of 23 kids and then a Bishop's class we had virtually all the kids. On each of the three observations. So when we review this aggregated data with the teachers, remember, we're not breaking it out by teacher, we're just sharing. And so what's gonna pop out here within the aggregated discussion with the teachers is that one thirty two out of two ten, that's our lowest area. So the discussion there is going to be OK, what happened? Like you, we really saw a good increase in students sitting down, stories going, OK, what's happening with the writing? Let's have a conversation.

18:11 :

And and we want to know what they think. Is happening with that writing. When we look at reinforcement statements, we notice that parent had 35 GAIL had six. And Bishop had 77 reinforcement statements. That's a total of 118 for all of the observations for the three teachers. We noticed that parent asked questions when needed and focused primarily on the areas of storing and sitting. We noticed that GAIL really wasn't using questioning strategies, was more often just telling people to sit down repeatedly.

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And we noticed that Bishop was really consistent with her reinforcement, but also with her questioning strategies, and always had those with a smile. And immediately after she had to question or prompt a student and they performed the action she gave in. Immediate positive reinforcement. We also noticed a couple other things. With parent, on the 1st observation occasion, there actually was no writing prompt. On the second observation there was a prompt, but the way it was written, it made it unclear for students as to what they were really supposed to do.

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And then the third time, she only gave a verbal prompt. There was nothing written. And Gail's classroom, what we noticed was that beginning of the transition, that storing period was very long and students were really off task. Eventually he got them settled down and he got them writing. And in Bishop's class, we noticed that students came in, they stored their stuff, they sat down, they got to writing. But we also noticed that the prompts weren't really related to the standards that Miss Bishop was teaching. So when we discuss this as an IT when we look at this data.

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It's going to be obvious to us that. Writing is still the weakest area, and that there's some seems to be a lack of clarity about what constitutes a good writing prompt and. Why the writing prompt is important. Before we make any decisions about how to follow that up, we'll actually have the conversations with the teachers and we'll sit down and we'll say, look, we had one thirty two out of two ten on this, so this is our lowest area.

20:37 :

We noticed that the prompts weren't always on the board. Again, we're not going to single out an individual teacher because this is this is a normative process. We noticed that prompts were always on the board and prompts weren't always. Written to focus on the standard. That's what we've seen. Talk to us about what's going on for you. And so maybe there we we come out with, there was confusion about what they were actually supposed to do.

21:02 :

There was confusion about what the prompt was supposed to focus on, one of the teachers might say. I just don't really understand like why do we have this prompt and how do I structure it? How do I create a question that students are actually going to write on and so. If there's a common problem, we can follow up our professional development then on that writing, prompt with all three of the

teachers and continue the normative process. And and really getting the written prompts to be high quality if.

21:37 :

Did different teachers have different issues with those writing prompts? Then we may move into more of a formative process where we're working individually with those teachers, and we're going to model that or talk about that in Part 2 of this podcast. So in our discussion as an instructional leadership team, what really is going to jump out at us in addition to the positive improvement? Is the struggles that mister Gales happening? Because if we look remember, he really was struggling in the store area.

22:12 :

And if we look at that aggregate data, we had about 75 % successful, a successful rate of students coming in and storing their stuff appropriately. About 75 %, but mister Galey's data was 40 %, so almost half of what the total was. And if we pulled Gail's numbers out of the aggregated data, we had a 99 % success rate compared to mister Galey's 40 % success rate. Another thing that really jumps out is the number of reinforcement statements. In total, of the three observations of the three teachers, so 9 observations, there were 118 reinforcement statements.

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Of that hundred and eighteen, six of those were mister Gales. In addition, instead of questioning students and prompting them to think about the procedure, he was just telling them what to do. And he was doing that repeatedly. So at this point. We see that mister Gale probably needs some different support than what Miss Parent and Miss Bishop need, so we're going to move from a normative process into a formative process. And that formative process is what we'll look at next week when we come back for Part 2 of this two-part series on implementing the flywheel and what that flywheel really looks like.

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So let's summarize how the flywheel worked in this normative process. We saw there was an issue, we talked to teachers, we collaboratively with the teachers, identified something to do professional development on which was the entering class procedure. We implemented the professional development. We then identified specific look force and created an instrument that would allow us to gather that data effectively. We scheduled observations. And each team member went in and observed each of the teachers to follow up with our customized instrument on the fidelity of the implementation. We then looked at that data and identified specific successes and specific areas where teachers were still struggling.

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We took that data to the teachers aggregated. Talked about what we saw, they talked about what they were experiencing and together identified the next step of the professional development. That's the flywheel professional development follow-up observation, use the data to plan the next round of professional development. That's the flywheel. This was a normative example of working with a group of early career teachers. And what we're going to do is come back next week and we're going to look at mister Gale and we're going to go through the same process, the same flywheel, but we'll do it in a formative process where we are focusing on the individual needs of 1 specific teacher.

25:21 :

In other words, we're doing a coaching cycle. That wraps up today's content focused episode again. We'll be back next week for Part 2, and then on November twenty ninth we'll have Doctor David Franklin, who founded and overseas a wonderful Facebook community for school leaders. Honestly, I'm not a huge fan of Facebook, but David's provided a really nice space for leaders to be able to come in to interact with each other, ask questions, and support each other.

25:52 :

That Facebook group is called the principal's desk. You need to. You need to request access, and if you do decide to go on Facebook and check out David's Facebook group, the principal's desk. You'll need to request admission and please mention that you heard about the group on this podcast, because that would be encouraging for both of us. If you enjoyed today's show, please subscribe and rate this podcast. You can ask questions, make requests, and give us feedback at frederick@frederickbuskey.com And if you'd like more content tailored towards the needs of assistant principals, you can head over to my website at frederickhusky.com That wraps up today's show.

26:33 :

I'm Frederick Buskey, and I hope you'll join me next time for the Assistant Principal podcast cheers.