

Making an Impact in Eight: Achieving Focus and Staying Intentional

The following eight ideas provide opportunities for further reflection and action. We provide five reflections on what great leaders do and avoid doing to gain focus, as well as three considerations for how to make an impact in eight minutes, eight weeks, and eight months to guide your leadership planning and practice.

Great Leaders Do . . .	Great Leaders Avoid . . .
1. Communicate clearly and often the beliefs, intentions, and priorities—and the <i>why</i> behind them—to guide the work of the school	Assuming staff members are clear about the beliefs, intentions, and priorities after communicating them once or twice; focusing on the <i>what</i> only and not the <i>why</i>
Current reality and next steps:	
2. Simplify what is important by communicating what is <i>tight</i> (or non-negotiable) and what is <i>loose</i> (or where there is room for flexibility)	Communicating that everything is tight and inflexible
Current reality and next steps:	
3. Authentically and carefully ensure that time is well managed and intentionally focused on prioritized work (They prevent distractors, including other people, from changing the direction of the work.)	Allowing distractors to determine use of daily time
Current reality and next steps:	

<p>4. Avoid actions and messages that are not aligned to what has been communicated as important and non-negotiable.</p>	<p>Communicating what is important and non-negotiable in the school, but then allowing actions and messages misaligned with this focus</p>
<p>Current reality and next steps:</p>	
<p>5. Spend time in areas of the school that would benefit from leadership presence; intentionally build relationships one conversation at a time and prioritize attending events based on an analysis of impact and commitment to priorities</p>	<p>Experiencing burnout by going to every single event or deciding to avoid all events; physically avoiding the trouble spots in the school; paying little attention to the importance of intentional visibility</p>
<p>Current reality and next steps:</p>	
<p>6. What will you do in <i>eight minutes</i> to create intentionality and focus?</p>	
<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself, “Am I clear about what I expect and what is important to me as a leader? How do I communicate these things to staff? What would staff say if someone asked them what is important to me as their leader?” Talk with some of your staff and students to determine the answers if you are unsure. • Talk with office staff about your daily priorities so they can help you stay focused and not get distracted. They can screen phone calls and communicate that you are busy working with teachers or students and will get back to the callers at the end of the day. Most things can wait until the next day. By all means, address those that cannot, but get good at knowing the difference. 	
<p>My ideas:</p>	

7. What will you do in *eight weeks* to create intentionality and focus?

For example:

- Demonstrate that you value the people in your school and model for others the importance of building relationships by doing an “8 by 5.” For eight weeks, focus on getting to know five staff members, students, and parents each week by asking them questions. Ask, “How was your weekend? What did you do? Is there anything I can help you with?” In week one, focus on two parents, one staff member, and two students; in week two, focus on one parent, one staff member, and three students, and so on.
- Attend one or two grade-level or content-alike team meetings daily for eight weeks. Support these teams in moving their practice closer to the expectation or refining their practices.

My ideas:

8. What will you do in *eight months* to create intentionality and focus?

For example:

- Journal or blog throughout the school year. Notice and record improvements in your own practice, team practice, office staff practice, student performance, and so on, so you can reflect and share progress at the end of the school year. This will also provide guidance regarding next steps as your notes will give anecdotal evidence of improvements and continued areas for growth.
- Communicate the why behind decisions often throughout the school year. It will feel redundant, but the redundancy will be intentional and focused on communicating the connection to the school vision and goals.

My ideas: