

Final Report

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Recipient of a Faculty Research Grant in October 2012

Presentation of “ ‘Fixing’ me First. Setting Priorities and Not Giving Up on Them” at the Academy for Educational Studies Conference in Springfield, Missouri, October 14-16, 2012

B. Reinstatement of Problems Researched:

Mrs. Pam Dixon, Dr. Sid Womack, and I submitted a proposal to speak at the Academy for Educational Studies Conference in Springfield, Missouri, October 14-16, 2012. We were accepted to present on the topic of priority setting. Mrs. Dixon was unable to attend, but assisted in by providing her expertise as a counselor in this field during the preparation phase was invaluable. I spoke with the assistance of Dr. Womack at the conference.

The purpose of this project was to help professors and teachers learn how to tackle the critical questions in education by learning how to be better managers of their time, how to set priorities, and to be the most productive they can with the least stress through the day. Stress management techniques were also be utilized.

C. Review of the professional enhancement opportunity , creative work, or research procedure.

“Fixing” Me First. Setting Priorities and Not Giving Up on Them

Often it is said that we need to “fix” our public schools. Often times the so-called problems in schools are not going to change because of governmental or societal reasons. What can change easily in our schools is how we feel as teachers and how we handle our day-to-day issues. The question may not always be answered with money, tests, or programs—but in improving the conditions of the everyday life of the ones who hold so much responsibility in our schools’ classrooms.

Often as teachers, we get lost in a quagmire of rules, grading, paperwork, lesson planning, e-mailing, parent conferences, and the list goes on and on. Many teachers take work home on a daily basis. In a recent study, researchers found that on average, a teacher in Arkansas works 60 hours a week on average. This is besides all of their home and other obligations. Teachers in the study felt stressed, tired, and ready to quit. In fact, 1 out of 5 of the teachers reported that they were planning to leave the profession within 5 years.

This life of stress, over-work, and exhaustion does not precipitate the most effective teaching. For teachers to be at their best, they need to follow the advice they give their student when they get ready for their big standardized tests. Get plenty of rest and eat well. However, often that does not occur. Many teachers rarely get proper exercise, nutrition, or sleep. Other teachers just find themselves to be completely unorganized in their classrooms. They believe they simply do

not have time, knowledge, and/or skills to achieve these things.

D. Summary of findings, outcomes, or experiences had.

This presentation not only taught individuals how to organize their time so that they could be less stressed and more effective, but it also took the participants through an actual priority setting technique so that they can find the time in their day to have some “me” time or to just be a little more organized. The first step in “fixing” our schools is to make sure that we have happy and healthy teachers. Our objective was to help teachers reach this goal with both research based techniques as well as life lessons learned in the trenches of the classroom.

E. Conclusions and recommendations.

As mentioned above, this was a very hands on and practical presentation. It is often these types of presentations in which I find myself feeling very accomplished as a professional and a researcher. It is exciting to be able to share the years of experience from teaching and working with other professionals to those outside of our university. Thank you for the opportunity that your provided.