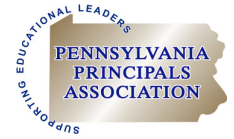


From the Desk of the Assistant Executive Director

What is your thing?



**By Dr. Michael S. Snell,
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Many years ago, as a young administrator I was asked this question. I was a budding principal attempting to set the world on fire and run a really good middle school. But what is your thing? Again, it was asked of me. What thing?

I came to realize it was a question of instructional leadership by my superintendent and assistant superintendent. Their intent was to push me beyond running a really good middle school to that of knowing curriculum, instruction and assessment. And in that simple question, they wanted to know what I know, or was willing to learn, to become an effective instructional leader. Something that I would know more than the others on our team and could serve as a resource to others.

Two things happened because of that question. The superintendent, Dr. Emilie Lonardi, helped me create an afternoon of professional development on curriculum integration in my middle school. Furthermore, she also co-presented the session with me and taught me how to design and deliver great professional development and presentations.

Next, I was encouraged by both Dr. Lonardi and the assistant superintendent, Dr. Mary English, to board a plane and fly to Fort Lauderdale to attend a three-day session on the structured study of student work. OK, encouraged might be stating it lightly. This encouragement provided me another opportunity to improve my instructional leadership, and thus, another "thing" that I became knowledgeable about and could work into professional development in my middle school.

Throughout my career, once I learned a new thing, I wanted to learn another new thing. And so on.

So, what is your thing?



Here are three suggestions for your next steps:

- 1.** Find out what excites you in your work with students and teachers. Is it curriculum, instruction and assessment? Is it mental health and social-emotional supports to improve learning? Perhaps, let me ask it this way ... what topic excites you enough to learn it and then put the time into planning a great staff development session? Ask others, colleagues, teachers and your boss, what is it that they see in you ... where is my passion?
- 2.** Search for great professional development opportunities that will make you a better instructional leader. Reach out to the Pennsylvania Principals Association and use us as a resource for your growth. We offer professional development and leadership opportunities that will help!
- 3.** Read. I mentioned this in the last issue. Read daily and make a habit of it! Read about the future of education and the possibilities of what's ahead. Brush up on the latest trends in curriculum or instruction. Start a book read with colleagues!

Finally, I want to thank Drs. Lonardi and English for pushing me beyond what was comfortable in running a really good middle school. As a testament to their great work, I too, have expected those around me to grow and learn things. We give back to others when it is given to us early on ... it's what we do in education. So, if you are responsible for the growth and development of others, try starting a conversation with ... *What is your thing?*