

# Making the Most out of the Not-So-Best Year Ever

In education, summer is a time of transition and reflection. It offers us a chance to change, to find out who you are or who you want to be. It is a time to reaffirm or reinvent. Keeping that in mind, this summer I asked myself two critical questions: who have I become and who do I want to be?

This year has been a time of turmoil and change personally, which I know has affected me professionally. So much of my emotional and physical attention had to focus on home and I know it affected my ability to perform at the pace and level of excellence I expect of myself at work. It is easy to understand the need for Trauma Informed Care training for educators, and my empathy increased for the youth in my community and what so many of them must endure today. Thankfully, I had an understanding administration, but it will require a different kind of summer to get myself refocused.

We all have these moments in life, but how we overcome them and get back on track is what matters. For me, I started with an analysis. I made a list of what I had accomplished, then I met with my principal, and we discussed what goals I had achieved or begun and what I hoped to accomplish but had not attained or even attempted. This review is something I've done every year, but it was especially powerful this year as I was feeling quite down about my perceived lack of accomplishments. After the review, I realized I may not have gotten as far along in my goals as I had hoped, but at least I had started them. And for some of them, the concept was so new to us, like developing circulating maker kits, that there was a lot of thinking and planning with staff and student input involved.

If you're looking to improve or reflect upon your year, I recommend starting with the exercise of writing out your beginning of year (BOY) goals and where you landed with end of year (EOY) achievements. Which BOY goals were achieved, which have been initiated with a vision to continue working toward them next year, and which were not even begun? I had organized my BOY goals into categories with two to four goals in each one: programming, collaboration, collection, communication, and facilities. For example, within the category of collection, as mentioned above, one of the goals was to "research and develop a process for cataloging Take-Make-Return activity kits and pilot/test adding these hands-on home activities to the collection."

This year, instead of just having a list and checking off each goal, I encourage you to make columns, or a rubric, for stages of progress and check the box most appropriate for that specific goal: not begun, planning, piloted/initiated, developing/in progress, accomplished. With my goal to create a Google folder containing video mini-lessons for the classroom teachers to access at point of need, I had to check the box "not begun," but with the goal to create a more organized storage system of makerspace items, circulating equipment, carnival games, and props, I checked the box "developing/in progress."

Making this list and the discussion with my principal was very helpful mentally, as it helped me realize I had accomplished more than I realized, and professionally, as it helped me begin to map out my future. Using a rubric-style analysis of my goals, I was able to be less emotional and more professional about the headway made toward achieving my annual goals. Focusing on my successes and not my failures, I am able to advance and lay out a rejuvenating summer to support the coming year.

Every summer I choose a theme to guide my rejuvenation focus. This summer it's self-discovery. On a road to rediscovery, why not start with a personality tests? I began the summer by learning how I have evolved personally in order to understand myself better, perform more effectively professionally, and improve my interactions with others. Many of us have taken a Myers-Briggs Personality Type or Keirsey Temperament Sorter assessment as well as the silly ones to occasionally make waves through social media outlets. Or, have you heard of the Enneagram of Personality Types? Although there is an in-depth test you can pay for (for example, \$12 through the Enneagram Institute) to learn which one of nine Enneagram personality types you are. If interested in sampling this concept, there are also simplified, free tests available (just as can be found with Myers-Briggs and Keirsey). No personality test is perfect, but it will provide a foundation to research how I can interact with others productively and function more efficiently both personally and professionally. With this knowledge, I will develop a new rubric to evaluate the previous year's goals, placing each on a spectrum of need to drop or add to next year's goals.

Once I utilize my research to flesh out my continuing and proposed new goals for 2019-2020, I will sit down with my principal to share what I have learned about myself, analyze my proposed goals, and receive his feedback and thoughts for moving forward. Through this conversation—which you could also do with your administration or library advisory board—we cement which proposed goals and objectives to maintain, progress, and establish. Ultimately, we should realize although not all goals are achieved, the only true failure is not trying. What is important is to set goals, strive to the best of your ability to achieve them throughout the school year, and revisit them in a professional manner next spring.

## Resources

Trauma Informed Care: <https://www.in.gov/dwd/2921.htm>

Personality tests

- Myers-Briggs: <https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/>
- Keirsey: <https://www.keirsey.com/>
- Enneagram: <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-descriptions>

## About the Editor

**Leslie B. Preddy**, MS, has been the school librarian at Perry Meridian Middle School in Indianapolis, IN, since 1992 and has served as an adjunct professor for Indiana University, Indiana State University, and IUPUI. She has presented webinars and is a frequent speaker and consultant at local, state, national, and international education conferences and events. She has published many articles in professional journals, co-created online resources for educators, and is the author of *SSR with Intervention: A School Library Action Research Project*, *Social Readers: Promoting Reading in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and *School Library Makerspaces*. Preddy is a recipient of many awards including AASL's Collaborative School Library Media Award and Perry Township Schools Teacher of the Year. She is Past President of the American Association of School Librarians and the Association of Indiana School Library Educators (AISLE). Preddy is a recent recipient of two grants for her school library makerspace from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, administered by the Indiana State Library.

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