



Sweet FINISHES

A SPRINKLE OF STRATEGIES TO END THE YEAR



As the school year comes to a close, these short and sweet ideas can help you reflect, recognize, and carry forward what matters most.

The Cherry on Top: 3 Questions to Close Your Year Strong

As the school year comes to a close, before packing away materials or rushing into summer plans, pause and ask three simple questions:

- What worked well this year?
- What challenged us the most?
- What should we carry forward into next year?

These questions can create some of the most meaningful conversations your team has all year. Reflection helps teams celebrate growth, identify barriers, and focus on the practices that made the greatest impact on students and staff.

Consider having teams capture their responses in a shared document or during a final collaborative conversation. The goal is not perfection. **The goal is clarity.**

Sometimes the strongest start to a new school year begins with an honest reflection on the one that just ended.



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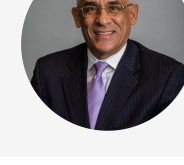
Sprinkles of Recognition: Small Moves That Build Big Momentum

Schools thrive when individuals and teams work together toward a shared purpose and feel recognized for their contributions. Strong schools create consistency, trust, and a clear sense of connection across the entire organization.

Positive momentum grows when recognition happens intentionally and consistently. Celebrate the practices that are making a difference. Highlight exemplary teamwork during meetings, encourage informal “coffee conversations,” or send simple “pick-me-up notes” to thank teachers and staff for positive actions.

These small moments of recognition do more than boost morale.

They strengthen relationships, reinforce effective practices, and create meaningful momentum across the entire school community.



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The Final Slice: Bringing Clarity to Your Last Team Meeting

The final staff meeting of the year can become one of the most meaningful professional learning conversations your team has all year. As a principal, I posted each staff meeting agenda on chart paper throughout the year so teams had a visible agenda to guide our meetings. During our final meeting, I reused those agendas for a gallery walk activity.

Staff reflected on the learning, conversations, and commitments we made as a team throughout the year. We discussed how the learning impacted individual practice, collaboration, and student outcomes. **Most importantly, we identified which practices became part of our daily work and where we still needed growth.**

Those conversations often became the foundation for our professional learning plan for the upcoming school year.

Close the year with intention.

Capture what worked.

Carry it forward.

Didn't save your agendas? Simply create chart paper for each major learning topic and let the reflection begin.



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A Scoop of Student Voice: Quick Insights That Stick

As the school year winds down, it's the perfect time to capture authentic reflection while the daily experience is still fresh in students' minds. While staff input is important for planning ahead, student voice provides insights that traditional data often misses.

Giving students a platform to share their perspectives on engagement, pacing, stress, and learning barriers helps schools uncover patterns and identify opportunities for growth.

Before everyone heads into summer, consider using a quick student survey to elevate student voice, capture meaningful feedback, and help guide stronger decisions for next year.

When we listen to students before they leave, we return in the fall with greater clarity about how to help them thrive.



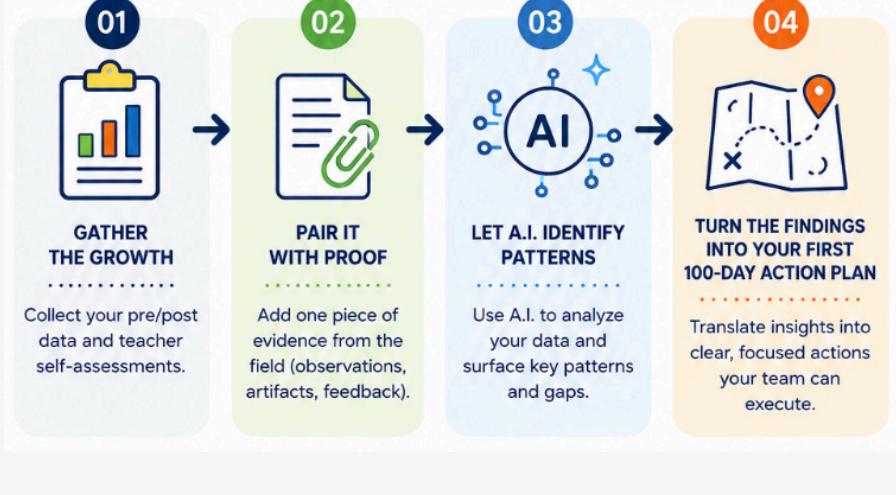
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Sweet Reflections: Locking In Learning Before Summer

Before the summer haze sets in, lock in your school's progress with one simple move: gather your pre/post data, pair it with one piece of evidence from the field, and analyze it quickly.

I recently reviewed teacher self-assessments alongside coaching observation notes and used A.I. to identify patterns. Within minutes, it highlighted a significant “knowing-doing” gap. Teacher confidence had increased, but consistent implementation of practices like data use, rubric creation, and assessment planning was still inconsistent.

Try this simple process:



This small shift moves teams from “what we think happened” to “what we actually did.”



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