

# HARNESSING THE POWER OF OPTIONAL DESCRIPTORS IN DAILY SAM MEETINGS

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# Who we are

- Kristen Ulery, Principal
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> year as a SAM principal
  - 5<sup>th</sup> year as an elementary principal
  - 8 years as associate principal at jr. high
- Kimberly Heath, SAM
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> year as a SAM
  - K-8 instructional coach
    - 6 years as an instructional coach
  - Former assistant principal at jr. high

# Our SAM journey

- Started SAM program in 2014 in the same district but different buildings
- July 2016 Kristen changed districts & brought the SAM process to new building
- Kim joined the district in August and became Kristen's SAM

# Session objectives

- Participants will learn strategies for using optional descriptors to better understand demands on the principal's time and make strategic decisions to optimize instructional leadership time.
- Participants will analyze the instructional and management tasks in their buildings and identify areas where optional descriptors can provide more specific data for planning and decision-making.

# Your experience with optional descriptors

What is your level of knowledge/experience with optional descriptors?

Line up according to the answer that best describes your experience with optional descriptors:

1. I have no idea what they are or how to find them in my TimeTrack calendar.
2. I have heard of them but have not used them.
3. I have tried using them on a limited basis or use them infrequently.
4. I tag most of my calendar events with an optional descriptor.

# Why optional descriptors?

- Optimizing the instructional leader's time requires understanding how they use their time
  - Many activities in the leader's day fall into common "bucket" categories like
    - Planning, curriculum, and assessment
    - Decision making groups and committees
    - General Management
    - Office work/prep
  - Making intentional decisions about how to use time requires better understanding how time in these categories is really being spent
  - Optional descriptions provide an opportunity to better analyze and understand the data

# How can we use optional descriptors?

- Optional descriptors can more specifically define how time is being used in both instructional and management categories
- Instructional time
  - Understanding how the leader uses time in those bucket categories helps identify if priorities are getting sufficient time & if that time is effective
- Management time
  - The greatest power to change time lies here
    - Available time is finite
    - In order to create more instructional time, you must identify ways to reduce management time
    - Identifying where management time is spent allows SAM teams to use first responders and other methods to divert or increase the efficiency of those management tasks

# Defining Optional Descriptors

- How do we decide what optional descriptors to use?
  - Look at your data, your team's goals, and your targeted descriptors
  - Ask questions about the data and identify additional data that would be useful
    - What activities are frequently occurring in the pre-defined categories?
    - In which areas would we like to better understand how the instructional leader is spending his or her time?

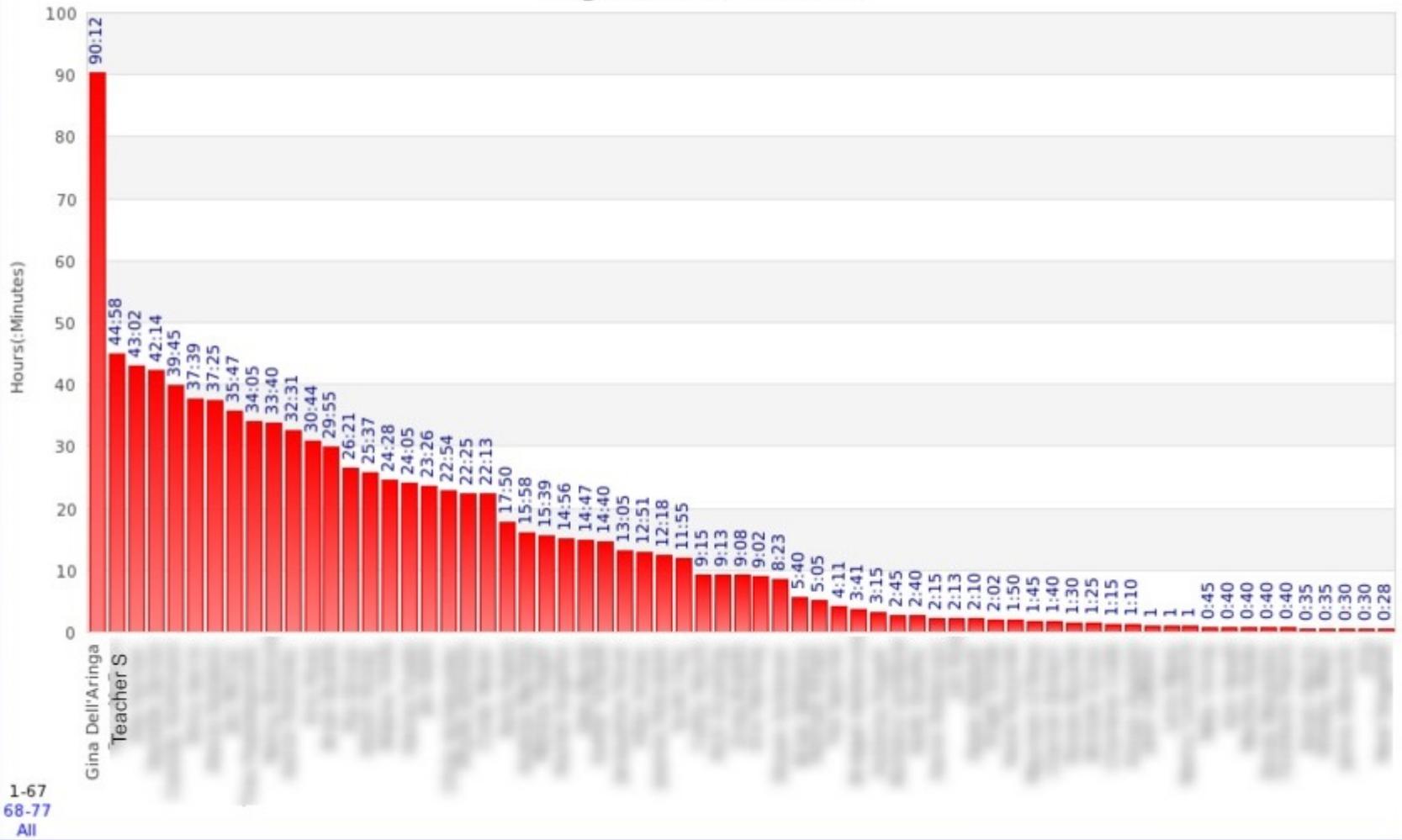
Some examples to help spark your thinking...

# Optional Descriptors for Instruction

- Planning, curriculum, and assessment
  - Team planning
  - Individual planning conversations with teachers
    - Instructional planning for the class as a whole (Tier 1)
    - Planning for individual students or groups of students who are struggling (Tier 2 & 3)
    - Pre-conference conversations
  - How is planning time being spent with each teacher?



### Instructional Time Spent with Each Individual August, 2015 - Present

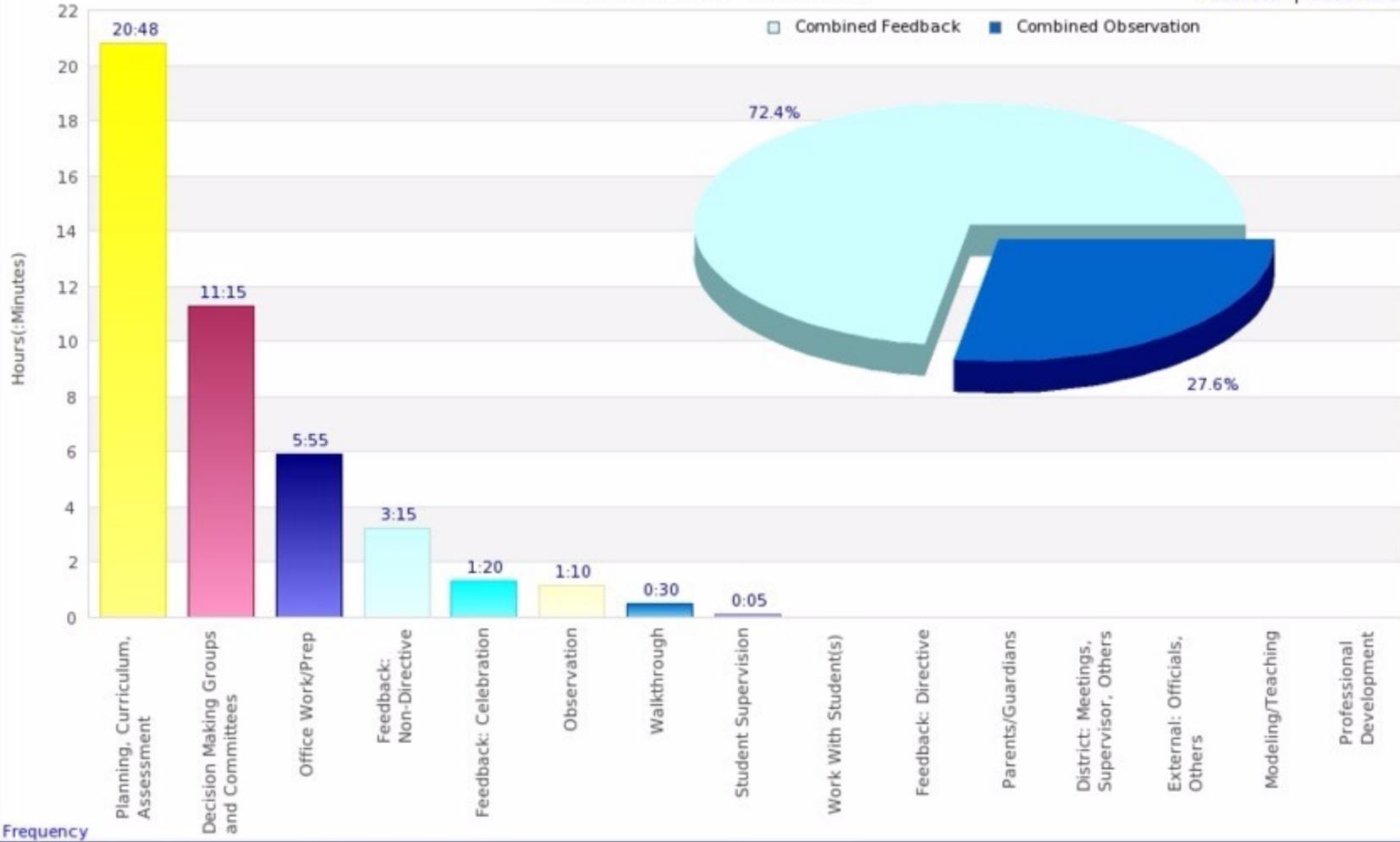


1-67  
68-77  
All

Total Time: 44hr 18min

### Instructional Time Spent with Teacher S August, 2015 - Present

Feedback | Observation



Frequency

Chart

Annual

Optional

Restroom break

PD reading

Restroom break

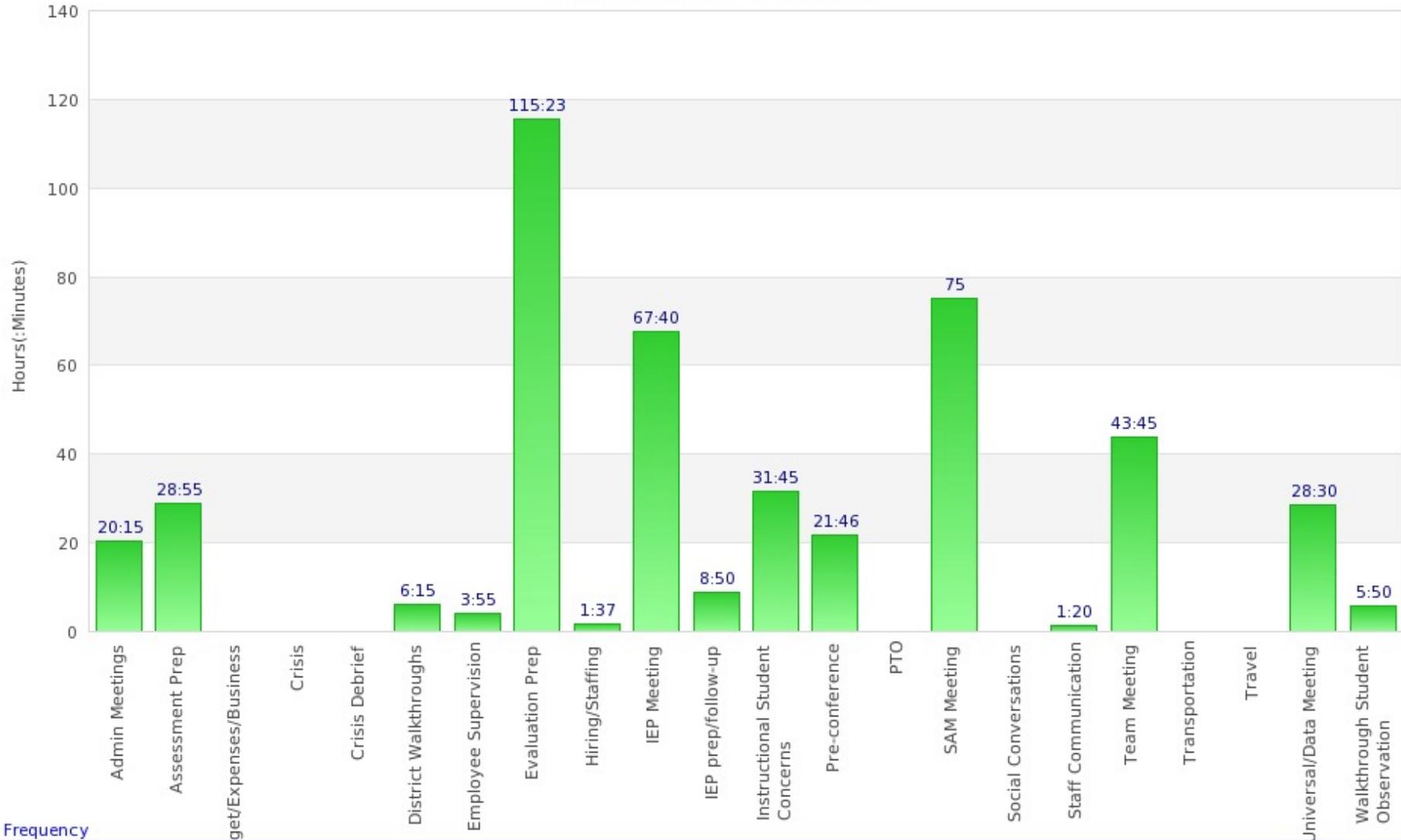
# Discuss

- Discuss with colleagues near you
  - What questions or hypotheses would you have about how that planning, curriculum, and assessment time is being spent with Teacher S?
- Share some questions & hypotheses with whole group
- Discuss with colleagues near you
  - How would you answer those questions? What additional data would you need?

# The story behind Teacher S

- Teacher S is a special education teacher in the therapeutic program for students with autism
- Hypothesis:
  - The bulk of the planning time discrepancy between Teacher S and her colleagues was due to planning for specific students who were struggling.
- Optional descriptors allowed us to dig deeper into the data
  - Individual student concerns descriptor revealed that 6 hours of the 20 hours of planning, curriculum and assessment time logged with that teacher was spent on planning for individual students rather than curriculum and instruction for the class as a whole.
    - Example: developing a plan to meaningfully engage a student in instruction who would self-injure when presented with tasks

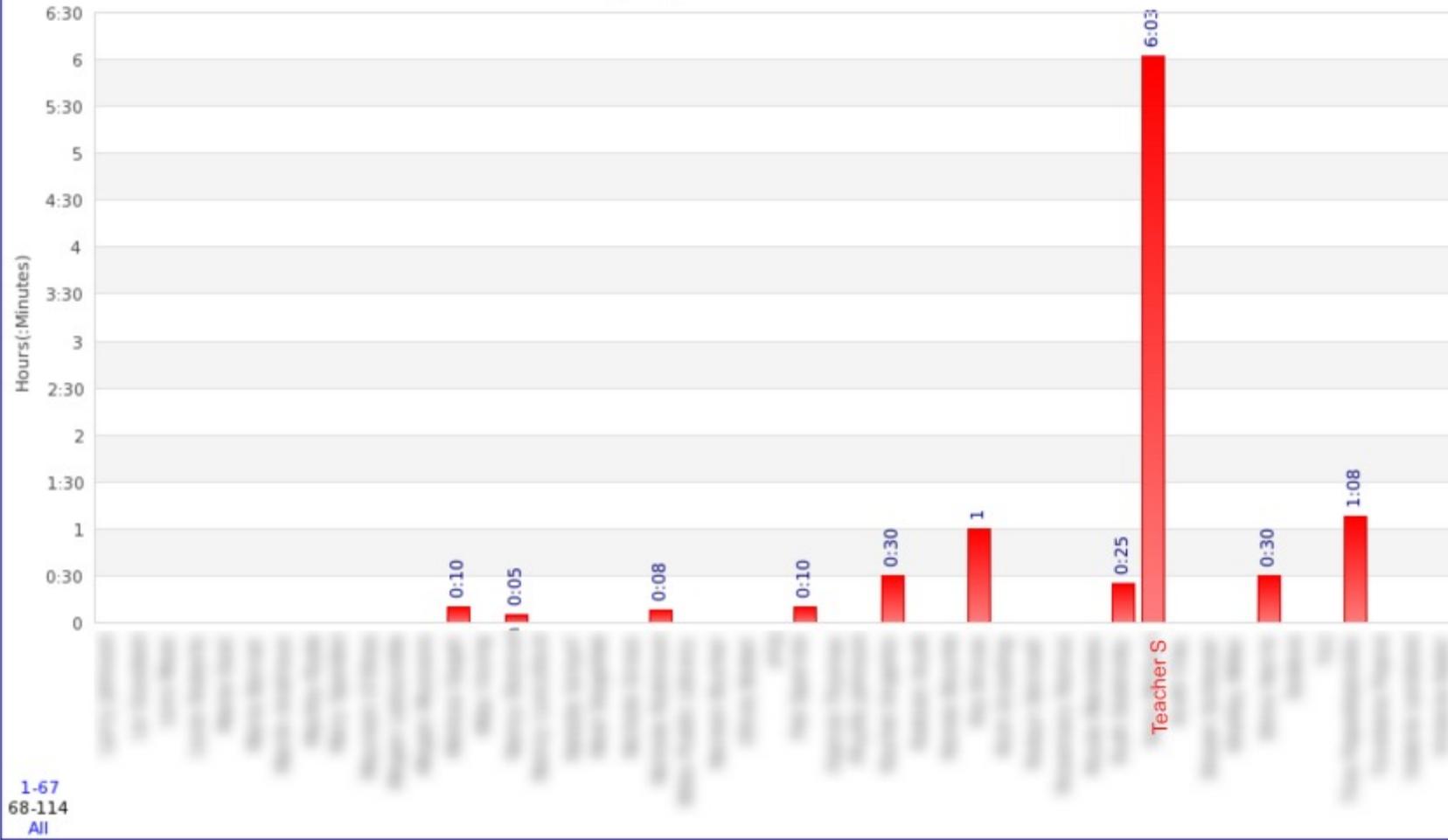
### Instructional Time Spent by Optional Descriptor August, 2015 - Present



Frequency



### Optional Descriptor: Instructional Student Concerns for Instructional Time Spent with Each Individual August, 2015 - Present



1-67  
68-114  
All

# Other Instructional Optional Descriptors

- Decision making groups & committees
  - District administrative staff meetings
    - Reconciled for percentage instructional vs. management time
  - IEP meetings
  - Building committees (building leadership team, Rtl teams, etc.)
- Walkthroughs
  - Walkthroughs for evaluation of Kristen's own teachers
  - Walkthroughs with other district administrators & sometimes in other buildings
  - Walkthroughs to observe students rather than teachers
- Assessment
  - State-mandated assessment planning and PD separated from local or classroom assessment
- SAM Meetings
- What are your instructional "bucket" categories you want to better define?

# Management Optional Descriptors

- Reducing management time increases available instructional time
  - Area of greatest impact because management tasks are easiest to change
    - Can be eliminated, made more efficient, or reassigned to first responders
  - Reducing management time requires understanding where it's spent
    - Optional descriptors for management identify areas to target for change
- Impact of the SAM mindset on prioritization around management tasks
  - Management tasks get our attention because they are visible and immediate, not necessarily important
  - How do you make the instructional leadership tasks visible and valued by the school community?
    - Start by explaining the SAM process & sharing data with colleagues & the community

# General Management

- Budget & Expenses
  - Can your secretary submit your expenses?
- Transportation
  - How much time do you spend dealing with issues related to busing? How can you reduce that?
- Travel
  - How much time do you spend driving back and forth to meetings?
    - Last year, I spent over 15 hours driving to meetings at district office & other buildings
    - Citing those numbers as the reasons, I asked district administrators to come to my office for meetings
      - Additional benefit was getting them in my building more

# Other Management Optional Descriptors

- Office work/prep
  - Are you making copies of receipts, evaluations, etc.?
  - How can you utilize your office staff to reduce time spent on office work tasks?
  - Can your secretary save time by scheduling things on your calendar for you?
- Student supervision
  - How much time does the instructional leader spend on student supervision?
  - Is it purposeful and intentional?
    - Is it to be visible, get to know students, and better understand the environment?
    - Or is it a regular duty that could be assigned to someone else?
  - Intervention in student crisis
    - I spent 19 hours last year responding to student crisis intervention in my special ed program
      - I wasn't the first responder, so for some of my special ed teachers the number was three times that
      - This data informed my conversations with district administrators about additional resources needed to support that program and maintain instructional integrity for the entire building
- In which areas can better defining your data help your team reduce management time?

# Your Turn

- Using the SAM-defined descriptors, identify your building's "bucket" categories
  - Identify three optional descriptors each for instructional and management that will provide valuable data to guide your team's planning

# Now what?

- How do I create these things in TimeTrack?
  - Click on the TimeTrack in the upper left corner
  - Select “Settings” and “Optional Descriptor Setup” from the menu
  - On the “New” tab, type desired name for your optional descriptor in the box labeled ‘New Optional Descriptor Name’
  - Click the “Add” button
  - Repeat for all desired optional descriptors
- Once created, they will automatically appear as a dropdown box on the screen when you create a new event

# Questions & Comments

- Questions?
- Ideas or action plans you would like to share?

# Thank you to...

Barbara Lestikow

Our wonderful Time Change Coach

Mark Shellinger & the conference planning team

Eric Kramer, Jim Mercer, & NSIP technical development team

For continuing to refine TimeTrack

# Harnessing the Power of Optional Descriptors in TimeTrack

## Instructional

Look at each pre-defined instructional descriptor in TimeTrack and identify some common activities in your calendar that fall under that category.

Which activities take the most time?

Which activities have the greatest impact on instruction?

Which activities have limited impact on instruction?

Identify three optional descriptors for instruction that you would like to begin tracking

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can you use data from these optional descriptors to achieve your goals in your team's targeted descriptors?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Management

Look at each pre-defined management descriptor in TimeTrack and identify some common activities in your calendar that fall under that category.

On which activities do you spend the most time?

On which activities would you like to spend less time?

How could you differentiate specific activities in these areas?

Identify three areas where you would like to be more efficient or spend less time and create optional descriptors for those areas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can you use data from these optional descriptors to reduce management time in the targeted areas?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.