

Philosophy of Principalship

When I was in school, I always had a fear of authority. I did what my teachers asked and I have always perceived the actions of principals as working behind the scenes. Principals were extremely scary to me. It has been a giant mystery, especially as a child in grade school. I was never a student that acted out or caught an attitude with any school staff.

That is a short excerpt about my perception of administrators throughout my experience in school. A principal should be able to connect with students, and their staff should be able to form relationships with students. It does not matter the relationship is, as long as students know you are there, and you care about their success. I have mediated between security and students before. Security and deans have a job to do, and if they cannot form relationships with their students, it creates a lot more work for the administrator. There has got to be a working relationship between students and staff that makes the whole experience successful. You may have a student that does not like a teacher. You may have a teacher that makes students feel uncomfortable. You may have a security person that has poor boundaries with the students. Whatever the case may be, it is my job as principal to make sure these issues can be resolved. Maybe the resolution is a call home. Maybe the resolution is having a conversation with staff, and/or moving them. Creating a safe and rigorous learning environment is what every great principal should aspire to achieve.

According to Sullivan, Grand, and Patel (2023). the American public education system was not designed for non-white students. Evidence of the achievement gap in public education can be seen as soon as when children begin kindergarten. This is why administrators need to make the advancement of students of color one of their core intentions and professional values.

As communities become more diverse, schools must adapt to the changes that may happen within the community. This illustrates the great need of effective communication within a school system (p.2).

As an administrator, I believe it is good practice to go out and get to know your students. Being present during recess, lunchtime, and gym is one of the strategies I use to get to know my students. I want to be visible and present for all students to see. Whitaker (1997) puts forth the idea that principals need to lead by modeling. Principals can often get caught up in office responsibilities, meetings, phone calls, and discipline. It is important to be visible in the common areas. She insists that a good principal should be seen in classrooms. This communicates to students and staff the importance of the classroom community and the instruction that takes place within. If a principal does stop in for an informal observation, she asserts that a principal should provide some feedback to the teacher. The administrator should tell the teacher some positives they saw while in the classroom (1). As a high school dean, I would often sit down in a classroom during the teacher's instruction. Coming from a support staff lens, it is always beneficial for me to see quality instruction from a neutral position. It fascinates me to watch teachers maintain their classroom management and provide excellent instruction.

The relationship between the school and the community that surrounds it is also incredibly important. As principal, it is my job to effectively communicate what is going on in the school to the community. Forming strong working relationships with community members and organizations will only help the principal out with resources and other supports.

In conclusion, my personal experience with principals was not positive or negative. They were illusive in my grade schools. Closing the achievement gap should be one of a principal's main goals. Most students start experiencing marginalization the moment they walk into kindergarten. It is important to be visible as a principal. This is a way you can show support for your students as well as for your staff. Staff should be able to form meaningful relationships with their students because with strong relationships, you have much more buy in from the students. Lastly, the community surrounding the school is important as well. You must form good working relationships with community members and organizations.

References

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