



# **FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE OFFICE:**

Navigating Your First Year as a Principal

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# PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION



To equip new (or new to a building) principals with strategies, tools, and insights to successfully navigate the first year in school leadership.



To learn to examine the provincial, divisional, school and classroom settings and to use multiple views and perspectives as data to inform your decisions and practices.



To allow for potential networking, dialogue, and mentorship between colleagues in this session.

# SOME QUICK ADVICE

## Seven Must-Do's in Your First Year- Joanne Rooney

1. Transition
2. Build Relationships
3. Learn the Culture
4. Don't Change Everything
5. Delegate
6. Honor Staff Roles
7. a. Pick Your Battles
7. b. Control The Narrative-Big or Small Problems





# SOME THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHING

- Few things in this world are absolute
- Be decisively flexible and flexibly decisive
- Administration is full of complex simplicities and simple complexities
- I assumed staff was doing a good job unless they proved me wrong
- There are many seats at the voice table, but very few at the vote table
- Authenticity is essential
- You are the boss!
- You can't be taken advantage of if you are giving the advantage
- Take care of yourself!
- In 35 years in education, many things have changed.



**“CHILDREN NOW LOVE LUXURY;  
THEY HAVE BAD MANNERS,  
CONTEMPT FOR AUTHORITY; THEY  
SHOW DISRESPECT FOR ELDERS AND  
LOVE CHATTER IN PLACE OF  
EXERCISE. CHILDREN ARE NOW  
TYRANTS, NOT THE SERVANTS OF  
THEIR HOUSEHOLDS. THEY NO  
LONGER RISE WHEN ELDERS ENTER  
THE ROOM.**

**-SOCRATES**



# WHERE TO START

- Meet with your admin partner, if you have one, and be clear about your and their goals, expectations and duties for the time before students come, the opening staff meeting, first day, week, month, term, and year. Use both historical and new practices.
- If you are solo, explore historical practices and take some time to reflect on what you want things to look like.
- [Create a plan](#) using one of the many templates available or use your own.
- Check your staffing, enrolments, timetable and other essential elements of your school. Find out if and what you need and take steps to get what you need but don't have.
- Time is a gift...use it wisely.

# NOW WHAT?

- If you are new to the school, I would suggest taking a bit of time to introduce yourself to folks. It will be time well spent.
- Remember that the school has had many opening staff meetings. See what has been done and use it as a starting point. Also, buy your Administrative Professional a coffee or preferred drink often. They run the place!
- Don't feel compelled to change a lot of things right away and be careful of traditions!



# TIME MANAGEMENT THOUGHTS

## Do

- Prioritize Tasks -KW
- Delegate Responsibilities
- Set Clear Goals
- Schedule Time for Reflection & Planning
- Attempt to Maintain a Work-Life Balance
- Use Organizers and Planners

## Don't

- Procrastinate-Do something & make decisions
- Micromanage
- Overcommit
- Multitask without Purpose
- Forget to Breathe & Take Breaks
- Please the “ring leaders”

# SETTING YOUR VISION AND GOALS

## Defining Your Vision:

**Establish a clear vision and goals  
for your school.**

## Why?

- **Provides Direction:** Guides decision-making and aligns actions.
- **Enhances Culture:** Promotes a shared purpose and positive environment.
- **Increases Accountability:** Sets benchmarks and tracks progress.
- **Motivates:** Energizes staff and students.
- **Facilitates Communication:** Clarifies expectations and ensures consistency.



# DEVELOP YOUR VISION AND GOALS

## How?

1. Engage stakeholders  
early

- Hold introductory meetings with staff, parents, and students to present and gather input on your vision.

2. Communicate Clearly  
and Consistently

- Form a committee with representatives from all stakeholder groups to refine and promote the vision.

3. Integrate the Vision  
into Daily Practices

4. Know When to Get  
New Glasses

# EXAMPLES OF SHORT-TERM GOALS

## Build Positive Relationships

- Engage with staff and students, as well as caregivers & SCC



## Assess School Climate

- Conduct Surveys, Meetings and Ask Questions



## Set Initial Priorities

- Develop a 30-60-90 Day Plan



# EXAMPLES OF LONG-TERM GOALS

## Improve Academic Performance

- Use data-informed strategies

## Enhance School Culture

- Promote a Positive Environment
- Define “positive environment” and use appropriate ways to measure
- Help staff to learn to measure

## Sustainable Leadership Development

- Build Capacity and Grow a Variety of types of Leaders in your school.

# SET YOUR GOALS-EXAMPLES



## Goal Setting (SMART)



## Specific:

### Define Clear Objectives

- Clearly articulate what you aim to achieve. Instead of a vague goal like "Improve student performance," set a specific objective such as "Increase math test scores by 10% within the next academic year."



## Measurable:

### Establish Criteria for Success

- Determine how you will measure progress and success. Use quantitative metrics such as test scores, attendance rates, or behavioral incidents to track progress and assess achievement.



# SETTING YOUR GOALS

## **Achievable:**

- **Set Realistic and Attainable Goals**
  - Ensure goals are challenging yet attainable given the school's resources and constraints. For example, aim for a 5% improvement in reading levels, if that would mean success for your students and staff.

## **Relevant:**

- **Align with School and Divisional Goals**
  - Ensure the goals align with the school's broader mission and strategic objectives. For instance, a goal to increase overall graduation rates should take into account student profiles, existing practices and one or two specific next steps.

## **Time-Bound:**

- **Set Deadlines and Milestones-Also plans if milestones are not being met.**
  - Assign a clear timeframe for achieving the goals, with specific deadlines and interim milestones to maintain momentum and provide opportunities for reassessment. For example, aim to achieve a 10% increase in student attendance by the end of the semester.

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE: STAFF

## Open Communication:

- Maintain transparent, honest, and regular communication.
- Actively listen to teachers' and staff's concerns and feedback.

## Show Appreciation:

- Recognize and celebrate achievements and hard work.
- Provide positive feedback and acknowledge contributions publicly.

## Foster Professional Development:

- Offer opportunities for continuous learning and growth.
- Support staff in attending workshops, conferences, and training sessions.
- Have a personal professional library for staff to use.

## Collaborative Decision-Making:

- Involve staff in the decision-making process. Some choice-B or C
- Create committees or working groups to gather input and share responsibilities.

## Build Trust and Respect:

- Be consistent and fair in your actions and policies.
- Respect teachers' and staff's expertise and autonomy in their roles. Honor everyone and the contract they signed.



# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SCHOOL CULTURE: STUDENTS & COMMUNITY

1

## **Open & Consistent Communication:**

- Keep parents and students informed through newsletters, emails, and social media.
- Host regular meetings, town halls, or virtual sessions

2

## **Create Welcoming Environments:**

- Foster a positive and inclusive school culture.
- Organize events and activities that encourage participation from both students and parents.

3

## **Encourage Feedback and Participation:**

- Provide channels for students and parents to share their ideas, suggestions, and feedback.
- Involve them in decision-making processes through committees or advisory groups.

4

## **Celebrate Achievements:**

- Recognize and celebrate students' academic & other achievements.
- Host events to celebrate milestones and successes with parents and the community.

5

## **Offer Support and Resources:**

- Provide resources and support services to help students and parents succeed.
- Organize workshops, seminars, and informational sessions on relevant topics.

# INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

## Principal is the Chief Instructional Leader

- Balancing Admin Duties with IL Time
- Time Constraints of Admin Duties
- Immediate needs of the school, such as behavioral or medical needs

## Managing Diverse Needs and Abilities

- Student needs vs student learning-Nero
- Varied Teacher and Staff Skill Levels as well as student skill levels

## Implementing Sustainable Change

- Resistance to Change-RTI
- Consistency and Follow-Through



# MANAGING CHALLENGES & FINDING SUPPORT

## Principal Can be a Lonely Occupation

- Conflicts-Critical Conversations
- Managing Change-yours & from elsewhere
- Dealing with Resistance

## Support Networks & Mentorship

- **Important to find a mentor or professional network(s)**
- **STF, SSBL, NASSP, NAESP, CAPS, ASCD**

# A FEW RESOURCES-NO STAFF MEETING TEMPLATES

- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/10dPHEp5XijhZEuzSLaB2S0ek5U3i8L\\_C/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106703439421560819032&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10dPHEp5XijhZEuzSLaB2S0ek5U3i8L_C/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106703439421560819032&rtpof=true&sd=true)
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rj\\_iWes-P--lTVj3H6yya0mB\\_M8W498rZ\\_WEsxhg7hM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rj_iWes-P--lTVj3H6yya0mB_M8W498rZ_WEsxhg7hM/edit?usp=sharing)
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/0B\\_YCUCXFGsFTTkNTUWtBWE4xX00/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106703439421560819032&resourcekey=0-u\\_IQ23WdhVJjSIG7PMRnoA&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/0B_YCUCXFGsFTTkNTUWtBWE4xX00/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106703439421560819032&resourcekey=0-u_IQ23WdhVJjSIG7PMRnoA&rtpof=true&sd=true)
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/0B\\_YCUCXFGsFTNFhpX1dQVHJEV0U/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106703439421560819032&resourcekey=0-BKIWJ8fDzZ9kTVLsnG9dSg&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/0B_YCUCXFGsFTNFhpX1dQVHJEV0U/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106703439421560819032&resourcekey=0-BKIWJ8fDzZ9kTVLsnG9dSg&rtpof=true&sd=true)



# MORE RESOURCES & GO-TO'S

- [Edutopia](#): Research-based blog posts and videos provide materials that principals can share with teachers to demonstrate the varied ways to teach and engage.
- [Learning Forward](#): Home in on high-quality professional learning with webinars, research, toolkits, and programs.
- [Corwin](#): A one-stop shop for books and services devoted to professional development in education.
- [Principals and Teachers Network](#): LinkedIn community of principals and teachers sharing effective learning strategies.
- <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/for-principals-planning-the-first-year>
- [Better Leaders Better Schools](#): Free resources, plus podcasts with expert guests. Built for a commute or workout listen.
- [NAESP](#): Through *Principal* magazine, [New Principal Navigator](#), and [NAESP Mastermind Groups](#), new principals enjoy a host of content and resources targeting the unique challenges of the first years on the job.
- [EducationAdminWebAdvisor](#): Online training sessions—live and on-demand—delving into equity, social-emotional learning, classroom practices, and school management basics.
- [EdWeek Update and The Top 7](#): Daily and weekly roundups of the education news you need to know.

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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