



What Educators Need to Remember When Transitioning from Teacher to Administrator

By Educator Barnes – January 11, 2020

Last school year, I wrapped up my 13th year as a teacher, but year 14, I returned as a school administrator. There are two types of administrators, those who were great teachers and those who were not. We all know of those administrators whose charisma, nepotism, or friendship got them a leadership role. What about those administrators who were talented

well-respected teachers who turn into administrators who can't lead or no one wants to teach under or respects? As I aim to be an effective administrator, I would like to share what I need to remember, so I won't go from an effective teacher to an ineffective administrator.

My words matter.

I have seen teachers and students become upset over a school leader's words. Delivery and word choice are key. A church deacon I know used to say, "You can draw more bees with honey than vinegar." Having difficult conversations is part of the administrator role, and even delivering consequences; however, conversations and consequences can be destructive or restorative.

Teachers need self-care; their mental health matters.

Teacher burnout is real and typically caused by the demands of administration. Schools have tons of tasks that need to be completed, but there is a way to get these tasks done without stressing out teachers. Giving last-minute deadlines, and micromanaging tasks is a sure-fire way to burn out teachers. Yes, due to law or district changes, this might be tough, yet being willing to give the why is helpful, and also pitching in to help or providing others to help can ease stress.

Educators need to get involved in education policy.

We need educators in the room making decisions about education. Being able to speak to my representatives during the school day was important to me as an educator. The school discipline bill I was passionate about would directly impact students I was serving. Administrators should be aware of education policies and participate in the process and allow and support teachers doing the same.

Teachers need to be heard.

There's nothing worse as a teacher than to feel that your administrator doesn't respect you or your ideas. No, you can't implement every idea, but if you are organizing committees for input and then go with your own agenda that is contradictory to your committee, teachers are not being heard.

Every staff member is an important part of the school.

I've seen administrators snap at custodians and treat their secretary like a less important individual. Every person in a school is important and no one should feel like they are being treated like an abused animal.

We must have accountability.

Relationships may change, but teachers have to be held accountable for students becoming great citizens. It was disappointing to see teachers who hurt children with verbal abuse or lack of content knowledge not being held accountable because they were friends with the principal.

Coaching teachers is necessary.

Firing teachers should not be the first solution to poor academic outcomes. Teachers need coaching, and administrators should be part of that coaching. The evaluation is a tool to support teachers, not solely a tool to fire teachers.

Administrators must be present.

Last, but not least, you can't lead if you are not around. There are many directions in which administrators are pulled, but students and staff should not have to wonder if you even showed up to work.

I know I stumbled and had to grow as a teacher, and the same will be the case as an administrator. Hopefully, keeping these thoughts at the forefront of my mind will help me continue down the path of becoming an effective administrator.