

# Tips for Your First Year as Principal

## 1. Build Relationships

- Get to know teachers on a personal level
- Eat lunch in the teachers' lunchroom
- Learn Children's names
- Connect children with parents
- Superintendent
- Secretary
- Custodian/Cafeteria
- Fake It 'Til you Feel It (positive, professional, enthusiastic)



## 2. Build Trust

- Make commitments and keep them
- Packaging matters
- Take think time before responding/don't make snap decisions under pressure
- Listen/Give teachers an opportunity to find their own solutions to problems
- Don't change anything the first year
- Ask for input (surveys, discussions with groups and individuals, committees)
- Find something to praise about every teacher

## 3. Be Visible

- Stand outside the front door to greet parents and children as they arrive to school
- Make morning announcements over the public address system
- Cafeteria duty
- Visit classrooms
- Be outside during dismissal

## 4. Communicate Effectively

- Summer letter to teachers
- Answer e-mail, phone calls, and written requests daily
- Be available/open door policy
- Don't sit behind your desk to talk to people. Have another area in your office for conferences such as a round table. If you have a small office, sit in front of your desk with the person when you are talking.
- When you are talking with someone in your office, ignore the telephone when it rings. Allow your voicemail to pick up.
- Schedule events before school starts and provide teachers with a calendar of the year.
- Weekly Events
- Perfect written communication (spelling, grammar, visually attractive, and quality print standards)

## 5. Faculty Meetings

- Make your first faculty meeting of the year a celebration. Enthusiasm is contagious. (decorate, theme, food)
- Start with a positive (M&M Award: Magnificent and Marvelous)
- Schedule all meetings at the start of school
- Provide a written agenda
- Provide snacks
- Be mindful of time
- Keep discussions on track (Don't allow negative people to dominate)



## 6. Teacher Evaluations

- Schedule evaluations in your calendar at the start of school/spread evenly Throughout the year (avoid holidays)
- Pre-conference with teachers to set expectations
- If the evaluation is scheduled, keep the appointment
- Provide written and verbal feedback on the same day or the very next day
- Hold a post-conference to discuss the evaluation
- Be prepared to handle evaluation disagreements calmly and professionally

## 7. Familiarize Yourself with Policies

- Board Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Web Site
- Illinois School Law
- Illinois Principal's Association Newsletter
- Information from the Regional Office of Education
- Special Education/Section 504 Policies

## 8. Reflect

- May faculty meeting
  - What worked well?
  - What can be improved for next year?
- Principal's Performance Form

## 9. Take Time for Yourself

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Eat (Don't skip lunch, keep snacks handy)
- Spend some time at home with your family
- Me time

## 10. Read "If You Don't Feed the Teachers They eat the Students" by Neila A. Connors