

Snapshots

Fast Fact: 78 percent of Americans



did other community projects throughout the year. We had over 240 fourth- through sixth-grade students sign up to participate in our first year—that's over 70 percent of the students in those grades. These students completed over 10,000 hours of service. I had one parent come up to me and say that this was one of the greatest things that our school has ever done for children. She said her child was thrilled at what she was able to accomplish, and gained greater self-esteem by serving others."

—**James W. Melville**,
principal of Freedom Elementary School, Highland, Utah

"Our goal at Homestead Elementary is to have our students become self-directed learners. This can only happen when students know where they are in the learning process. Our instructional staff deconstructed the Common Core Standards (grades K, 1, 4, 5) and the West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives (grades 2 and 3). Our teachers turned the deconstructed standards into kid-friendly "I Can" statements for both reading and math. Teachers use various types of formative assessment and students use "I Can Portfolios" to evaluate their own level of learning. Teachers, in turn, adjust instruction based on the formative assessment and the students' self-evaluation. Select students are monitored quarterly by the principal. Graphs are

Promising Practices

These innovative ideas were submitted by the 2012 class of National Distinguished Principals, recognized by NAESP for their outstanding school leadership.

"When I hired a teacher from another school, she asked if she could start a Service Club. Students were paired up with teachers, and would come before or stay after school to help the teacher with different projects. Students also

MYTWOCENTS

What's one way to make your staff meetings more efficient?

Our staff meetings can only be 30 minutes long, so I try to maximize our time together. I always say, "People first, papers wait," meaning things like updates and announcements that can be handled through paper or email can happen outside of staff meetings. Our time together should focus on collaboration. Lately,

we have been sharing best practices around the Common Core: providing strategies for increasing text complexity, replacing assessments with more rigorous tasks, and upgrading our instruction to ensure deep student understanding.

Jacie Maslyk, *principal, Crafton Elementary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

done quarterly to communicate to teachers how students are progressing with their portfolios. This year, our summative scores in math showed a growth of 31 points and our reading showed a growth of nine points.”

—**Diane K. Hull**, *principal of Homestead Elementary School, Dailey, West Virginia*

RESEARCH DIGEST

Principals Key to Retaining New Teachers

FINDING AND KEEPING excellent teachers is one of a principal's chief responsibilities. But today, that's no easy task. The 2012 *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* paints a grim picture of teacher morale, one that is likely familiar to principals: educators' satisfaction has dropped by fifteen percentage points since 2009. Amidst strained budgets and job insecurity, new teachers face a daunting start in the profession.

But principals are the key to keeping new teachers from leaving, according to new research published in *The Elementary School Journal*. For “Administrative Climate and Novices' Intent to Remain Teaching,” researchers from Wayne State University and Michigan State University surveyed 184 new elementary and middle-level teachers in Michigan and Indiana school districts. Researchers wanted to gauge how teachers' career attitudes were impacted by “administrative

climate,” defined as the routine beliefs and actions associated with administrator-teacher relationships.

Strong ties with an administrator are vital for new educators' commitment to teaching. When novice teachers reported poor administrator-teacher relationships in their schools, they were significantly less likely to indicate intent to remain teaching there. Researchers asked teachers about other factors besides these relationships that might influence their decisions to stay in the profession, including having adequate resources or a manageable workload. Administrative climate was still the strongest predictor for teachers' desire to continue teaching, even after researchers controlled for educators' prior levels of intent to remain teaching.

“As school leaders,” write the study's authors, “administrators are charged with creating an organizational climate that promotes individual commitment and organizational effectiveness (e.g., providing adequate resources and professional development, giving meaningful feedback and encouragement, and including teachers in decision making).”

To help guide novices through their first fledgling teaching years, principals can help teachers define goals, provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one another, and establish mentoring partnerships.

“The principal isn't just there to help the novice teacher handle disci-

Strong ties with an administrator are vital for new educators' commitment to teaching.

pline and classroom management,” said Peter Youngs, associate professor of educational policy at Michigan State University and lead investigator of the study. “What really makes a strong administrative climate is when the principal also knows the academic content well and can work with the beginning teacher on curriculum and instruction.”

The worst traits principals could display, according to previous research cited in this study, are arbitrary decision-making, abusiveness, and neglect of responsibilities.

Principals must cultivate connections with new teachers—but they cannot overlook ties with veteran teachers. According to the research, novice teachers are particularly sensitive to schoolwide administrator-teacher attitudes, and may feel caught in the middle of conflict between teachers and principals. Principals need to attend to the overall climate within their school, and encourage a supportive environment that can allow quality relationships to grow.

People will rally around meetings when they see them as informative and efficient. You want staff to come away from meetings with new knowledge and a sense that their input has been heard. The underpinning of all effective meetings is an agenda that has been distributed at least a day prior to the meeting. The meeting

must start on time and end within a reasonable time frame. A cardinal rule that should never be broken is to repeat information for those arriving late. By doing so, you disrespect people who arrived on time and you have established a pattern of noncompliance.

Don Sternberg, *principal, Wantagh Elementary School, Wantagh, New York*

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