Miranda “Sky” Tucker, 2011-2012

1) Communication is key. Communication is crucial as we use it to network, spread ideas, brain-storm, solve problems, and is the key to success when working with others in order to reach a common goal. Communication can build trust and mutual respect and is a shared belief that you can depend on each other to achieve a common purpose. My principal and I are in constant contact throughout the day in order to inform each other of the daily happenings within our building. We usually start the day by touching base about any activities and/or meetings that we have scheduled. We share all duties and again touch base throughout the day about what is happening with staff members, students and parents.

2) Listen more than you talk. The relationship between a principal and an assistant principal can be alot like a marriage. You may not always agree on everything but you must ALWAYS give a united front. In this marriage, the principal acts as the "mom" (whether male or female) and the assistant principal the "dad". Mom usually sets the rules for the household and dad sometimes allow you to break them. In the school setting, you have to be very aware of people thinking you are "the dad", taking advantage of you (the assistant) by thinking that they can "get away" with certain things because you are not "mom". I often have staff members say to me, "I feel like I can talk to you about..." In a case like this, I always listen but as I am listening I am analyzing the situation and thinking about what "mom" would do. If I am unsure I tell them that I will have to think about it and get back to them. In confidentiality, my principal and I discuss the situation and make a decision on which way to handle the given situation. You never want to go against your principal and/or allow for your staff to put you into a position in which they accuse you of saying one thing and your principal another.

My principal truly has an open door policy with me. She allows me to listen in on conversations with students, parents and staff members. I enjoy having the opportunity to listen to how she handles different situations. This helps prepare me for similar situations in the future.

3) Lead by Example. Never ask anything of your staff that you are not willing to do yourself. If there is trash in the hallway, don't call the janitor, pick it up. If it is 20 degrees outside and it's time for parent pick-up, get outside. Do not allow people to work in your building that have a mind-set of "that's not my job". If you are an educator working with kids, everything is your job. You are frst and foremost their teacher, but secondly you are their safe-place, for some students you are a parent they don't have. Sure we all have different responsibilities, but go over and beyond. A favorite quote of mine is: "Do a little more than you're paid to. Give a little more than you have to. Try a little harder than you want to. Aim a little higher than you think possible and give a lot of thanks to God for health, family and friends."

(By Ann Linkletter)
Lindsey Lesniewski, 2012-2013

1) The key to my success as an assistant principal is my ability to coach and reflect with my campus staff. One thing I pride myself on is focusing on quality walk-throughs versus mass quantity. I can remember my first year as an assistant principal I was so excited that I visited numerous classrooms but I never understood why certain teachers were not improving. Then one day I had a breakthrough moment as an administrator, reflected on my own practices and asked myself what would help me to improve. I realized I needed to take the time to talk to people about what I saw in their classrooms. My plan was to start individually coaching my teachers who were receptive to change. My goal was to do a thorough walk-through and set up a conference with that same staff member within 24 hours after the walk-through was completed to provide immediate and reflective feedback. During our conference, my goal was to provide an atmosphere of trust so we could have authentic conversations that truly provided constructive feedback in a nonthreatening manner. To make this work, I start off by having them walk me through their lesson. I would ask reflective questions that get the teachers to think about their practices and strategies that they would use during their lesson. My goal was to lead the teachers towards their own "a-ha moments" so they could take ownership of their own learning and want to implement their new ideas. From there, I would pull up the data I collected from the walk-through. I would sit with each individual and discuss what each indicator under each domain means. I would again ask the teacher to reflect upon their own practices so they can see their individual strengths, areas that may need improving and how that one specific lesson could have addressed an indicator on their walk-through.

Personally, I have had a lot of success working with individual teachers as a coach. One thing I have learned is that teachers want to improve and actively seek constructive feedback. I have even applied the same technique after an observation or a summative. Teachers have learned that I am not here to criticize their hard work, and they see me as a resource they can reflect with to improve their instructional practices.

Another thing I have implemented to help the teachers grow on campus is midyear conferences with all staff members. The conferences help to rejuvenate morale and reestablish professional goals that may have gone to the wayside. The conferences also help me to know what individuals' long-term professional goals are and what I can do to help support them in their efforts.

As an assistant principal my goal is to have the best of the best for my students. The only way I can ensure that is to individually coach teachers. Without this component, professional growth cannot take place and walk-throughs and observations hold no value.

2) As an assistant principal, one of my greatest contributions is my ability to build an effective community on campus. My main goal is to get everyone to work together to do what is best for our children. I believe if parents, teachers, administrators and students are all a part of the educational
process, there is nothing a child cannot accomplish. The key to getting everyone to work together is building effective relationships.

Developing connections is something I strive to do with everyone. Throughout the day, I ensure I am visible in the building. I strive to make a personal connection with each child. I work diligently to learn each child’s name and a little about their lives so they know I have a genuine interest in who they are. Students need to feel valued and know they are safe and loved while they are at school. Daily, students are reassured of this on the announcements. Interacting with students is the most rewarding part of my day and brings a smile to my face. I have seen children who have had behavioral challenges change tremendously simply by knowing somebody on campus cares for and loves them.

Having good relationships with the faculty is important to me as well. The staff needs to feel valued and respected. Walkthroughs, personal hand-written notes, face-to-face conferences, and an open-door policy have all contributed to strong relationships between me and my staff. I strive to create an environment where every staff member feels comfortable coming to me for any reason, personal or professional. As I build relationships with staff members, I make a dedicated effort to learn about their families. I want the faculty to know that I not only respect them professionally, but I truly do care about them personally as well. I have even organized a community blood drive for a staff member who was going through cancer treatments.

Building relationships with our students’ parents is integral for student success. I strive to have as many positive interactions with parents as possible. Every morning, I am outside opening car doors welcoming children and sending a friendly smile to the parents. I walk through the cafeteria at lunch time and have casual conversations with parents to get to know them a little bit more. I also work closely with our PTO on campus. Parents know that they can come to me whenever they have an issue or concern. My door is always open and I actively listen to what they have to say. When they have concerns, I work hard to come up with solutions that are fair and equitable. Some parents have had negative experiences with schools and do not always feel welcomed. My goal is to reassure them that school is a positive place and that their interactions with the campus and with me will always be based on keeping the best interest of their child in mind.

3) To ensure the validity of our special education program, I have worked diligently to understand and strengthen it on campus, beginning with our response to interventions. I have worked closely with our campus intervention team to help brainstorm and develop ideas that are prescribed and research-based and that specifically pinpoint a child’s targeted need. I have also developed a response to intervention checklist that details a variety of Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions we have available at Frazier. Teachers are expected to provide intervention services, but they need support from the campus. To help with this, I have worked closely with the implementation of our master schedule, which has daily intervention time built into the teachers’ schedules. This intervention time lets the teachers pull small groups of students who have targeted goals while paraprofessionals work with students on enrichment activities. The data they collect helps the intervention team make informed decisions about what steps to take next. If a
student continues to struggle after intense Tier 2 interventions, we refer that child for further screening or a full individual evaluation.

For students who qualify for special education services, I host staffings with all staff members who are to be present at the ARD to review the evaluation. We develop a plan for a proposed program for each individual student that qualifies for special education services. At Frazier Elementary, we have a variety of special education programs. Our campus is home to two ABLE classrooms, which specialize in the education of students with autism. We also have a resource/inclusion program which serves students with other learning and behavioral disabilities. I absolutely love working with the students and teachers in these programs. I understand the special learning needs these kids have, and I work hard to provide support and appropriate resources to the teachers and paraprofessionals in these classrooms, as well as to the parents of our special education students. I have worked closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the ARD committee is a collaborative effort between parents and staff members. Transition planning is something that is important to me as well. Our ABLE classrooms have specific social, communication and academic needs, have worked closely with our neighboring 5th grade campus to ensure a smooth transition from Frazier. I have also provided time for our ABLE teachers to go to that campus and meet with their former students. The goal of that is to have the students feel safe and to know that they are going to be okay in their new environment. As a proponent of autism awareness, I have helped to establish an annual Light it up Blue community and campus walk. This event celebrates all of the wonderful students in our ABLE program and in the community. The main thing I try to remember is that each child has their own unique way to learn. My goal at Frazier is to help support and facilitate their learning.
Dr. Lorena Zertuche. 2013-2014

1) For major events such as the annual volunteer luncheon, keep a spreadsheet which includes the action item, person responsible, date to be completed, and date completed in order to keep an organized record of everything that needs to be done to have a successful event. All of the details will be in one place without being forgotten and anyone can replicate the event in the future because of good recordkeeping. For minor or recurring events, use Outlook calendar to set reminders about teacher, mentor, or volunteer appreciation "sussies" or emails that need to be given or sent on a monthly basis. Also, delayed delivery can be a highly useful tool in sending reminders to teams about when their "Sunshine" team appreciation day they are responsible for is coming up. i.e. Administrative Professionals Day. Nurses Day. etc.

2) I love taking pictures and carry a camera with me everywhere that I go. I have my entire life and have many precious memories housed in photo albums and scrapbooks from across the years. As a teacher, I kept one every school year of my students that embodied the learning experiences we had together that year. When I became an Assistant Principal, I continued my tradition of taking pictures at each school wide event or just of great learning moments. I would put them on our school's electronic drive and send the link out to the entire staff so they could see them. After a couple of years, the drive became too full and I had to begin to save them to an electronic hard drive. Then, a few years ago, I discovered animoto. This wonderful program allows me to create slide shows within minutes by uploading the pictures, choosing music and labeling the pictures. Our staff loves being able to see the pictures and they give me great feedback. I have created more than 50 of these and some of the most gratifying compliments I have received have been from a couple of teacher colleagues and one of our assistant superintendents. They have told me that I have created a legacy in pictures for our school that chronicles the moments, happenings and events of our school's life.
Heather Metzgar, 2014-2015

1) In the spring of 2014, I attended my first EdCamp "nol-con ference- held in Houston. After my incredible experience, I came back to my campus and suggested that we have a "mini-Ed Camp" of our own during a faculty meeting after school. EdCamps are held nationwide and are similar to professional development conferences; however, they are built through the collaboration of educators rather than by an organization. Unlike a traditional conference, sessions are not planned or scheduled until the morning of the event. The session topics are diverse and reflect the desires of the attendees. The professionals in attendance gather for break-out sessions and begin sharing and learning from each other. One person acts as the facilitator for each session. but the idea is that everyone in the room shares experiences and asks questions of each other instead of looking to one person as the expert. The EdCamp model embraces a growth mindset, advocates social learning from each other. Empowers teachers and reminds teachers that they are the best change agents for leading and learning in schools. This professional development "non-conference" was the best I have ever experienced. Educators were inspired, excited and making connections with other educators from all over the state. Knowing that our Hewitt staff members had not attended an EdCamp. I wanted to bring the experience to each of them. I created an avenue of background knowledge about EdCamps using a wikispace (edcamphewitt.wikispaces.com) For two weeks prior to the event, new information was loaded daily to the wikispace and I had teachers put their topic ideas in the teachers' lounge to generate potential sessions. On the day of the event. our campus learning community settled on a schedule of two 3D-minute sessions covering a variety of topics including: iPad apps for kids. guided reading/math. Whole Brain teaching, outdoor garden ideas, and writing strategies. To join in on this journey, we invited several central office administrators to follow along on our wikispac. Due in part to the success of EdCamp Hewitt the district leadership team used the EdCamp model for a portion of the back-to-school professional development in August 2014. Additionally. I am now working with a group of MISD administrators to organize an EdCamp for the ESC Region 12 Administrators for Spring 2015. At Hewitt, we have decided to make EdCamp an annual "best practice" event! It is important as an instructional leader to model excitement and enthusiasm for learning and to bring fresh ideas to our campus. I try to be a positive example for our campus that will encourage and empower teachers. Additionally, I work to be a life-long learner myself so that my teachers see me embracing new ideas and making decisions that put the needs of our students and campus first. The EdCamp model provides a safe environment where everyone's ideas are seen as valuable and I believe we have come closer as a campus team because of it.

2) As the assistant principal of Hewitt Elementary. I am involved deeply in the campus leadership Professional Learning Community along with my principal, counselor and Math/ELA interventionists. We meet weekly throughout the school year in addition to also meeting with teachers in the monthly HIT (Hewitt Intervention Team) meetings. I have attended PLC development sessions including an in-house training for district leadership and a Solution Tree OIPLC at Work" conference. I have read and studied several books on PLCs and believe them to be essential for school improvement. When 1 began in my current position, our campus was beginning to work on enhancing the PLC concept for use with our students and teachers. Being that the main focus of a PLC is student learning. a continual effort is made
by our team to shift our campus focus from teaching to learning using the best instructional strategies available. We concentrate our efforts on four central questions:

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. How will we know if they have learned it?
3. How will we respond when a student "as difficulty learning?
4. How will we respond when an individual student has learned the concept but the class is not ready Lo move on as a whole?

Each member of our leadership PLC team provides input to these questions from a variety of perspectives and experiences. In turn, I work with the team to ensure that data is being collected, reviewed, and used to drive decision-making for our students. Along with the interventionists, the counselor, and my principal. We are then able to take the knowledge and strategies gained from our PLC time into the monthly HIT Meetings with our teachers. Our campus is made up of 53% at-risk students, the highest in Midway ISO. We house the bi-lingual program for the district and the majority of elementary SPED programs are based at our campus. The leadership PLC team is a vital part of closing the achievement gap between poor students, students of color and their more advantaged peers. Many of our at-risk students need support emotionally so that they are ready to learn academically. The school principal and I work together to spend quality time in the classrooms with students and teachers. Last year we lead the district elementary campuses in classroom walk-throughs. We are able to provide feedback to the leadership PLC team based on evidence we see in the classroom. We also touch on many other responsibilities including gathering and looking at data, building effective instructional strategies, and developing relationships with students and families. During my time as an instructional leader on this campus, I have been a part of making adjustments to the leadership PLC team process that have ultimately lead to higher achievement levels for our students.