



Debra Malone

Assistant Principal
Cartersville Middle School
Cartersville, Georgia

The stats:

- Years as assistant principal: 16
 - Educator for 30 years
 - NAESP 2016 National Outstanding Assistant Principal
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Education:

- Georgia State University, B.A.S.
 - University of West Georgia, master's in educational leadership
 - University of Alabama, Educational Specialist & Ed.D. ABD in educational leadership
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School details:

- Over 1,000 students
 - Grade span: 6–8
 - School mission: "To equip students to become responsible, productive citizens by providing a safe, cooperative learning environment that encourages students to reach their potential."
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Georgia Assistant Principal Understands Her Impact

Debra Malone may have officially begun her career as a teacher 30 years ago, but she finds inspiration from even further back. As she walked in for the first time to that teaching job in 1987, it was the voice of her second-grade teacher in her head that helped her know what to do. “To know that a teacher can impact me so powerfully—just to have the opportunity to try to impact other lives—is very daunting and the reason why we do what we do.”

Now assistant principal at Cartersville Middle School in Georgia, she sees evidence of her own impact every day: “It’s when a student comes into my office because they’re in trouble and then leaves my office and hugs my neck; when students run down the hall to tell me hello; and when a student comes back years later.”

On meeting students’ social-emotional needs at the middle level:

I think that, No. 1, having experience at all three levels helps me understand what sixth-graders are like and what eighth-graders need going to high school. We have a transitional program for students—those things help a lot as well.

On a personal note, one of the most important things is to take the time to build relationships with students. I try to deal with every situation as if it were my own child. As long as I can do that, I feel that I make good and fair choices for the parents and the students. If the students know you love and respect them, they will give you that in return.

On her most memorable experience as an assistant principal:

As far as accolades, it has been a humbling and exciting experience to receive the NAESP 2016 National Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year Award for the State of Georgia. That was such an honor because it was from my peers; to represent Georgia has been a very humbling experience because there are so many great administrators.

On another note, I helped to teach a child how to read in first grade, and to watch that student was truly a highlight.

On her greatest challenge as a school leader:

It’s keeping a positive school climate and being a cheerleader for my teachers. Teachers have so much responsibility, and the weight of that is very heavy, especially when there are a lot of changes coming. I try to always remind them why we do what we do, to keep that focus.

On her life outside of work:

I like to garden, love planting flowers, and I bike. Before I became an administrator I was a music teacher, so I play the piano and sing. I also enjoy spending time with family—I’m getting ready to be a grandmother. 📍