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## Best Practices

**1)** As a school leader, I believe there is nothing more important than relationship building. Timothy Hilton in Education Week Teacher says it best: "Building relationships with students is by far the most important thing a teacher can do. Without a solid foundation and relationships built on trust and respect, no quality learning will happen." This holds true for administrators toward staff: without a strong foundation, the hard work of student achievement will be slow and uphill. Relationships begin and end with trust. Trust is built when leaders have an open heart, mind, and hands towards all staff, students, and families. By being vulnerable and humble, sharing success and failures with others gives them a feeling that we are alike. Being transparent and dependable lets people know that I am trustworthy. I use the analogy of drawing a person: Start with learning a person's heart (passions), what is in their minds (goals), how to best use hands (lead and guide), and lastly feet (moving forward) on this road to success (standards and curriculum). This not only applies to the adults, but also for students. Without relationships, no work can be accomplished.

**2)** Another best practice is communication. The first step in communication is being able to articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that align with those of the school and district. Communicating that children are at the center of all that we do is first and foremost and should always be the lens through which a leader speaks. I believe the keys to effective communication are to know yourself; know your audience; be direct, specific, and clear; pay attention to nonverbal cues; listen more; and be positive and respectful. Know your audience; using a mixture of both formal and informal language works best while communicating. Communicating in writing, whether it be with students, staff, families, or other school dignitaries, takes thoughtful planning and preparation. Be direct, specific, and ensure a clear focus on providing simple, actionable, and specific instructions. Pay attention to nonverbal cues and tone, ensuring

that both body language and tone are in sync with what you are saying. Listen more than you speak, keep an open mind, and focus on how to thoughtfully respond. This practice builds rapport and understanding between the communicating parties. Finally, be positive and respectful; focus on bringing an honest, positive, and ego-less attitude to every situation that arises. Serving as a cheerleader instead of an autocrat helps maintain morale and can even facilitate creativity and effective problem-solving.