



Barry Wood

Straughn Elementary and Middle Schools
Andalusia, Alabama



I believe empowerment is a cornerstone of success at our school in every aspect and it starts small- a kind word about a student's new shirt or haircut, a small task assigned to a child to assist a teacher, listening to everyone on the staff before charting a new course. Building on that foundation through communicating about student performance, keeping stakeholders aware of our strengths and weakness, and promoting accountability through recognition programs, social media and positive discipline provide leadership opportunities at all levels.

A good part of that leadership is making decisions from an informed or data-driven perspective. We spend far more time than we would like testing at the state and local level, but we welcome the opportunity to embrace the facts. Creating an environment where students' instructional needs are constantly monitored and adjusted based on objective data points, requires a commitment from all parties to be transparent about our performance and to chart paths to greater achievement for every student.

As we strive to maintain our calculated decision making, it becomes all the more important to remain passionate in our leadership. Stakeholders may agree with any manager's good idea where they can rationalize the outcome of following a reasonable proposal. Passionate leadership, however, creates a climate where stakeholders not only can justify the decisions, but believe that the decisions are right for the organization.

As educators, we must be passionate about our profession, our students, and our schools. We have the ability to change trajectories of lives not only through education, but through the creation of opportunities throughout a student's school career. To not be deliberate in our actions and passionate in our decisions is to deny ourselves the true worth of our profession.