

New Jersey Principal Moonlights as Mayor

Lodi, New Jersey, principal Emil Carafa knows a thing or two about leadership. On top of being named a National Distinguished Principal in 2015, he was elected mayor of his town that same year. One might expect challenges for someone with so much responsibility, but Carafa says “the work I do in the public is an extension of my work at my school.”

Having served as principal of Washington Elementary School for 26 years and in the school district for 40, he’s certainly earned the trust of Lodi’s residents. “The people in the community respect my work as a principal, and they know I have an open-door policy any time at the end of the school day,” says Carafa.

On deciding to become a school principal:

I truly enjoyed teaching, but I believed I had something to offer as a principal. Education was changing, and I wanted to be part of the voice as an instructional leader. I was very involved with the teachers’ organizations on the local, county, and state levels. I enjoy working with people and advocating for educators. I believed that being a


school principal would expand my knowledge of education. I would be able to share my passion for education with students, teachers, and the school community.

On how the principalship has changed:

I always viewed the work as an instructional leader. I was a bit dismayed by the amount of non-instructional but important work that had to be done. I adjusted the managerial aspect of the job to meet the needs of my vision of an instructional leader.

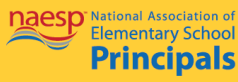
On the best lesson he’s learned:

The best lesson I have learned as a principal is to be honest. This work is all about the children. Sometimes, we lose our focus. Teachers, administrators, parents, and children need to realize that what we do for them is to help them succeed in the future.

The lesson learned is not to lose focus. When change is made on a national, state, county, or even the local level, we need to keep our eye on the children. That is why we are here! 



Photography by Lifetouch



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Emil Carafa

Principal
Washington Elementary School
Lodi, New Jersey

The stats:

■ Years principal: 26

Education:

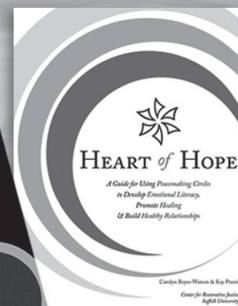
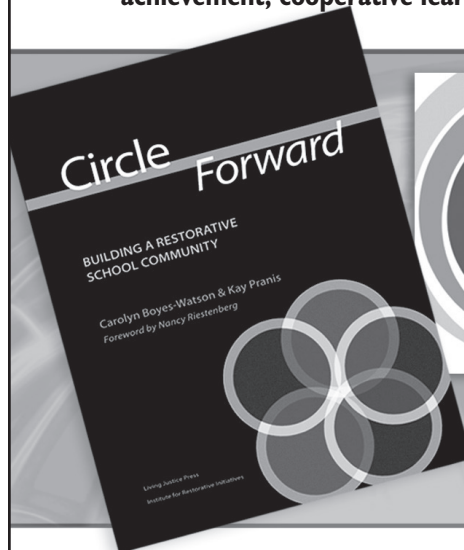
■ B.A. and M.A. from New Jersey State College

School Details:

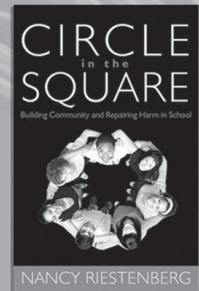
- Opened in 1917
- 390-420 students
- Grade span: Pre-K-5
- Title I school and district
- Diverse student body with over 20 languages spoken in building

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