

More Than a Career

Among the hot topics that have dominated the leadership arena in the past few years is the changing role of the principal. Implementing teacher evaluations, setting the tone for college- and career-ready standards, and ensuring student well-being rank high on the list of new challenges. Also at the forefront of education leadership issues is the shifting tenure of the principalship, with estimates indicating that new principals are staying in the job for less than five years. Principals who remain in the school leadership career path, however, are more determined than ever to not only make a difference for students and the school communities that they serve, but also to strengthen the principalship as a whole, recalibrating their leadership towards providing students with a more complete and well-rounded education.

You only have to look to popular leadership social media campaigns like #principalsinaction and #kidsdeserveit, the latter of which I previously profiled in this column, to experience the enthusiasm principals feel for school leadership. Such expressions of motivation, dedication, and direction speak to education leaders' approach to the principalship as a profession that is not just a career, but in fact is more analogous to a calling that carries through even post-principalship, as education writer Susan McLester reports in "Beyond the Principalship" (see page 26).

This issue of *Principal* magazine aims to provide practitioners with a bevy of resources to continue their own professional learning and development, regardless of where they are in their journey. Here are four growth strategies from the issue that a principal at any stage in his or her career can apply.

1 Develop your voice. Authors Russell J. Qualgria and Peter DeWitt urge principals to strengthen and leverage their leadership voice by first honing their learning and listening skills. (See "Make an Impact" on page 12.)

2 Engage in mentoring throughout your career. You can benefit from both being mentored as a novice, and then taking on a protégé as a veteran. Use reflective questioning and keep a journal in both roles. (See "Problem-Solving Strategies from a Mentoring Principal" on page 24 and "Throw Out a Lifeline" on page 8.)

3 Leverage a coach. Regardless of where you are in your journey, a coach can help you use an inquiry cycle with a defined theory of action to improve instruction at your school. (See "Celebrate the Power of Coaching" on page 20.)

4 Seek peer support. Take your professional learning into your own hands by developing a network of support that includes social media, professional associations, and a professional learning network. (See "Throw Out a Lifeline" on page 8.)

Wherever you are in your professional journey, I hope that this issue of *Principal* will provide you the strategies and tools you need to grow your leadership. 

—Kaylen Tucker, Ph.D.

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