

Show & Tell



A Quick Glance @ Ramona Dunn

Education: B.S.,
Elementary Education,
University of Central
Missouri; M.S.,
Education, Webster
University; Specialist in
Administration, University
of Central Missouri

Years as principal: 11

Awards & Recognition:
NAESP State Representative,
Exemplary New Principal
Honoree for Missouri,
Missouri Distinguished
Principal, National Blue
Ribbon School, Lighthouse
School—Leader in Me,
Building Teacher of the
Year, Kindest Kansas Citian

Mission statement: “Do
for one what I wish I could
do for everyone.”

Ramona Dunn

PRINCIPAL, NEW MARK MIDDLE SCHOOL, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Kansas City principal builds relationships to achieve transformation

By building relationships with students, parents, and staff throughout her career, Ramona Dunn has earned recognition for her leadership.

In 2019, Dunn took on the principalship of New Mark Middle School, which has an enrollment of approximately 985 seventh- and eighth-graders. There, she focuses even more on relationships, concentrating on the social-emotional aspects of learning for students

and staff alike, aware that everyone needs a little bit of reassurance to build their resilience against the pandemic’s shakeups.

While it’s harder to learn every student’s name and personality in a fast-paced middle school environment, Dunn says she works on it every day. “My proudest moment is watching my students unleash their greatness,” Dunn says. “Every single one of them has a gift, and I burst with pride watching them share that gift.”

What were some of your goals for your first year at New Mark Middle School?

Moving between districts and grade levels, it was important for me to listen and learn. It was important to me to build strong, trusting relationships with my staff. I met with each staff member individually at a local coffee shop prior to school starting. I wanted to work alongside the staff to create a culture of family and support for staff and students. I wanted to get back to our “why”—the reasons we do what we do—and focus.

Did moving from the elementary to the middle grades present challenges?

Getting a grasp on the schedule was a challenge—so many moving parts! I think the hardest part was not having the opportunity to get to know each and every student; [it is a] challenge with the middle school format. Kids are kids—it doesn’t matter if they are 6 or 14. They want to be valued, loved, and heard. I put focus there, and it helped build relationships quickly.

Why did you participate in a Lifetouch Memory Mission, and what did you take away from it?

One of Audrey Hepburn’s famous quotes is, “As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands: one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.” I was raised to give back. It didn’t matter how much or how little we had, we always had something to give. The opportunity to help build a future—literally and figuratively—for so many kiddos was a dream come true. My main takeaway from the experience is that I am intentional about finding the good and enjoying the little things every single day.

“My proudest moment is watching my students unleash their greatness.”

How has your involvement with NAESP paid off in your career?

We have so many wonderful leaders across the country, and NAESP has given us a platform to connect and learn and support each other. I have gained lifelong friends. Being principal is an amazing gig, but it can be lonely at times; having a network of leaders who are in your corner is a huge comfort.

What do you do for fun outside school hours?

I spend time with my beautiful daughter. Watching her play softball is one of my greatest joys.