

How a First-Time Principal Led Systemic Change Despite a Pandemic:

A Guide for New Administrators

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One of the greatest challenges for a first-time principal is making systemic change. Throw in a once in a hundred years pandemic and systemic change may seem the least of your problems. Now three years in, my journey as a new principal has been atypical to say the least, and it is not just due to COVID-19. I am on the other side of it now having navigated through the pandemic and overcome intimidating odds to have an elementary school with a significantly improved culture and climate, healthier students and staff, and the data to prove it. The experience of this journey has grazed the extremes of emotional pain and reward. I hope that by sharing my journey (a common one by all those in education, especially during the pandemic) others in managerial roles, especially those new to the position, will gain understanding of the elements for and guidance of how to lead systemic change.

DISCLAIMER

This article is written from my authentic perspective of events and what I learned as a result. While there may be many who share my viewpoints, there may also be others who do not. I wrote this article with absolutely no intention of criticizing any one person, group of people, or organization. This article was written with sensitivity and acknowledgement that we are all in various stages of learning and can benefit from someone sharing the process of leading positive systemic change even in the darkest times.

ARTICLE STRUCTURE

Despite a high quality education, a variety of experiences, and the best of intentions, a brand new administrator fresh from an administrative credential program may find that learning in theory can be very different than putting into practice the day-to-day nuances of applied leadership. That is why I separated this article into two voices. The regular typeface is a chronological account of my experiences. The bold italicized type describes the thought process of lessons learned and skills developed along the way.

YEAR ONE (2019-2020): THE EXPOSITION

From the onset, I faced significant challenges for a new principal that were not standard fare even without a pandemic. Having just earned my preliminary administrative credential and about to begin the second year of a master's program, I was grateful to be hired last minute as an elementary school principal before the start of the 2019-2020 school year in the district where I served my entire career as a middle school educator. I was the fourth principal in five years, hired to lead a stunned staff in mourning over losing another principal at the eleventh hour while processing accumulated trauma from years of inconsistent leadership. I had three days to clear out my classroom, move my belongings to the new school, and prepare to welcome teachers, with students arriving for the first day of school just two days after they did.

THE CHALLENGES PRESENT THEMSELVES

The natural consequence of so many rotating administrators was that staff was faced with years of district and site level changes to programs and initiatives without

continuity of direction and guidance, leaving them confused, frustrated, and rudderless.

As a result, the school's staff was fractured. The disharmony presented itself with some educators avoiding the lunchroom, grade level team meetings being kept to a minimum, talking behind others' backs, and an overall lack of harmony and disinterest in true collaboration. Staff lacked the trust necessary for social capital to function efficiently, and they were hurting. What unified them was the sense they would outlast me as just another principal, undermining me and waiting me out. I felt isolated, left to solve a brewing volcano of inherited problems. My new colleagues, mostly veteran teachers at the school, were skeptical and looked to me, the first year principal, to repair the cumulative damage. Clearly, it had been a long time since they came together with a common vision and clear action plan to achieve it. But the trust to develop that is earned, not forced. It takes time.

To begin building trust with a staff requires applying the same trauma informed practices educators are trained to apply with students. Build relationships with empathy and compassion. Show a genuine interest in every staff member by taking the time to meet individually to hear their stories and learn from their experiences at the school. Observe staff's interactions with each other and with students to gather the big picture needed to assess the climate and culture of the school. Do way more active listening and observing, instead of talking. Honor staff's experiences by acknowledging the hardships, appreciating and praising the accomplishments, and demonstrating that you understand their journey.

As Aaron Burr adequately advised Thomas Jefferson in the musical *Hamilton*, "Talk less... Smile more

...Don't let them know what you're against or what you're for...You wanna get ahead?...Fools who run their mouths off wind up dead.” (Miranda et al.)

New principals who talk more than they listen wind up making the road to trusted leadership a lot tougher to climb.

CHANGE COULD NOT COME FAST ENOUGH

Once I understood the depth of the situation, the task was to hunker down and earn the staff's trust through actions more than words. The school needed change, and they needed it fast. But the echoes of an admin credential instructor rang like an earworm in the manner of James Earl Jones in the movie Field of Dreams: “If you build it too fast, they won't come.” Yet, I could not move at a glacial pace. The students and families deserved better. The staff deserved better even if they did not know the possibilities of what better could be. My vision for the school was to build a mutually supportive and respected cohesive staff empowering every student to be the best versions of themselves and having fun in the process.

THE PATH TO EARNING TRUST IS PAINFUL

In an effort to focus on a vision for the school and build trust, I repeatedly attempted to assume the staff's perspective. I was transparent with my intentions with every baby step towards change, but, more often than not, the changes were not well received. Thanksgiving approached as the perfect time to show my understanding and appreciation by showering the staff with gratitude. Free massages were provided by a massage therapist. I quietly presented bouquets of flowers to each teacher and explained to them how I was specifically grateful. We

had cake; we had prizes. During the holiday season, we held a party and every staff member was presented with a custom ornament featuring our school.

I thought I was showing how I cared by acknowledging their work and providing praise while keeping the best interest of students and staff at heart. I remained positive and pleasant, responded in a timely manner, and elicited participation to make educated decisions. In and out of staff meetings, I encouraged collaboration, trying to enlist support and provide opportunities for leadership. But few people wanted it. They were forthcoming identifying and sharing the problems, but few wanted to be part of the solutions. I showed that I cared enough to hear the problems and worked to solve them, but unless I was agreeing with them, it was perceived I was not listening. I led with good intentions and admitted and owned my mistakes. Despite all the hours, all the effort, all the emotion, what I was doing simply was not enough. I felt so alone as if I was failing the staff, and the students and families along with them.

NO ONE IS AN ISLAND

As a first time principal out to prove yourself it would be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that every problem that appears before you is your job alone to solve. After all, you are the principal! Although you may never have that unrealistic expectation of others, it is a strange phenomenon that you think is your burden to bear; but it is not.

In 2016, during a Town Hall event in London, Former President Barack Obama shared the following:

“Anyone who wants to be a leader, ask yourself, ‘ How am I helping other people do

great things?'. I can't be everywhere, but I can assemble a team of people who are really good, really smart and really committed, who care about their mission and have integrity. Give them the tools and get rid of their barriers, and help coach them so they can do a great job. If they do, then by definition I will too..." (Karmali, 2016)

With so much at stake, the school's progress could not be sacrificed because of my newbie learning curve. There was so much to be done, yet I could not do it alone. In a small school district, each person wears several hats serving more than one role. I did not want to burden anyone at the district level with my problems.

The lesson I learned is surround yourself with a team of experienced mentors whom you trust from within and outside of your workplace sphere, such as current and former school site and district administrators, and colleagues both in and out of education. Ask them questions, learn from their experiences, appeal to their objectivity. You are new at the job and not expected to know it all. For me, this included current and former site principals and district administrators, as well as my husband and teacher friends. They and my assigned formal mentor from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) were a tremendous support for asking questions, bouncing off ideas, and summoning help. However, I did not know it at the time, but one of the single most influential decisions was hiring an educational consultant to help me focus on turning the vision for the school into a reality in the most efficient way possible and without alienating staff.

Just as our work with the educational consultant got started, the pandemic hit. The seismic shift was both shocking and numbing. My school is a Title I school in the city of San Jose in the

county of Santa Clara, CA: the epicenter of the pandemic's shelter in place for the United States. The shelter in place that was to last for two weeks, then one month turned into two, which turned into the remainder of the school year. Like schools across America and around the world, we scrambled. Our big pivot was from the school closure announcement on Friday the 13th of March 2020 to online education the following week. Teachers who knew little about technology were banding together to make their online classes work as we limped to the end of the school year.

YEAR TWO (2020-2021): SILENCE THE CHAOS WITH A SHARED VISION

With ever-changing pandemic guidelines and protocols, educators were on edge over the prospects of starting the new school year entirely online. In my second year as a principal, our school district offered families two options: hybrid learning with their home school using an online model until an ease in COVID-19 restrictions allowed the return of instruction on campus at some future date, or enroll students in a 100% online Virtual School Program (VSP) consisting of students from all elementary schools throughout the district through the end of the school year.

Days before all students started the new school year, I was asked to be the principal for both my current school and the district's elementary Virtual School Program (VSP). At that moment no one could have fully realized the magnitude of that request. Not only was I the leader of my regular school with staff looking to me to lead them into a year of insecurity, providing education in ways virtually unknown, but I was also charged with leading a relatively un-tested program with a staff of teachers plucked from various campuses whom had never worked together before and many of whom were teaching new grade levels.

Leadership is traditionally most effective when teammates have a common goal and know how to get there. However, this year would not lend itself to that formula. These were two different teams going in two completely different directions to reach a shared goal, with a very nervous me as their leader.

The brick and mortar school was educating students online only at the start of the year while anticipating the return to instruction on-campus at some ambiguous time. There was so much unknown. Questions remained. When and what would a return to on-campus instruction look like during a pandemic? We were guaranteed that whenever such a return would happen, it was definitely not going to be back to business as usual. And concerns for their own safety led many staff members to question what that return would look like to protect all from contracting and spreading the virus.

VSP staff, on the other hand, was faced with a commitment to teaching online all year long with no return to on-campus instruction. We were building the ship as we sailed it. VSP teachers scrambled to find ways to make learning engaging while they worked on the logistical standpoint of establishing collaborative relationships working in diverse remote environments with colleagues they had never worked with before and, for many, teaching grade levels they had never previously taught. VSP staff had to find their groove and settle in for the long haul within a collection of online classrooms: a brand new virtual school community.

It was necessary to determine ways to possibly bring the two staffs together while honoring their distinctly different paths and the different concerns that went along with them. One had to foresee and take into consideration the proverbial and logistical logjams of serving both staffs

and both communities of families. In what ways would managing both schools run together, parallel, or diverge?

BACK TO THE BASICS

It would have been easy to get caught up in all the dizzying noise and uncertainty. But the fact remained that now more than ever, families needed school to be the bedrock of the community as it always had been. Parents were struggling to keep their families intact with a sense of normalcy and school was the centerpiece for that structure. Physically and psychologically, schools were needed to anchor a sense of familiarity, direction, and hope. School was depended upon to provide reliable order in ways that provided comfort, predictability, and consistency that other areas of life during the pandemic just could not. To say that is a lot of pressure is an understatement. Allowing professional educators to wallow as victims of these crazy circumstances would be unhealthy, unsustainable, the weight of which would be unbearable. How could the staff be steered to a place of safety and security?

In times of stress, it is best to go back to the basics and comfort of familiarity. In meditation, we focus on the basics of breathing.

What are the basics of teaching?

- ***Create vested supportive relationships with students.***

What would you teach students who are faced with overwhelming problems?

- ***Listen and help change the perspective of the problem into an opportunity.***

How would you help students solve the problem?

- ***Scaffold problem-solving so the solution is do-able.***

The same rules for teaching apply to leading staff toward solutions.

FROM PROBLEM TO OPPORTUNITY

It was time to flip the script and find a new perspective to turn this once in a century tidal wave of a problem into helping staff see this new form of educating students and unifying families under the umbrella of school as a transformative and achievable opportunity. That sounds great (and naive) in theory, doesn't it? Putting it into practice would test and push the boundaries of my leadership skills.

LET IT OUT

Just as it was important to listen and get to know each staff member when first coming onboard as principal, the exercise of a collegial forum that allows teachers to have a constructive outlet to voice concerns and examine them is an important action to legitimize their thoughts and feelings, and promote team bonding. Meetings do not always have to end with answers and solutions. Sometimes their value is just the opportunity for validation, to know you are not alone, to know others care, and to share your humanity.

Over Zoom, both staffs together had open and honest conversations when we were reminded that, although the circumstances had greatly changed, our purpose and goals remained the same as they had always been: educate students and bond with them and their families to instill a lifelong love of learning. The sky may seem it was falling all around us, but we would

not let it deter us from our goal. Just as before the pandemic, we were still serving as role models for students and families. When life presents challenges, you must face them with fortitude and grit, not let the chaos cause you to get off course. That modeling started with me.

As principal you are a role model for the whole school community. Part of your job is to remain warm and relatable, yet strong and resolute to protect staff by muting noise that is harmful to them, help alleviate their worries and what-ifs by digging deeper into something foundational that unites them as a team toward building collective efficacy.

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE EFFICACY?

When a group of people believe they can meet a goal by working together and drawing off each other's strengths, they have collective efficacy. Educators who have collective efficacy consider all students in the school to be their responsibility and work collaboratively to mutually improve their practices.

Through his famous meta-analysis presented in the book, Visible Learning, John Hattie identified collective efficacy as one of the top influences on student achievement. Drawing off the work of Rachel Eells (2011), Hattie asserted that the power of the shared belief among teachers that their collective efforts will result in exceptional teaching and outstanding outcomes for students. (University of Minnesota, 2021)

Collective efficacy starts, continues, and ends with ongoing intentional and positive collaboration. This collaboration allows the team to cooperatively set attainable goals,

identify challenges and interventions, and support successes.

WHAT IS YOUR RALLYING POINT FOR COLLECTIVE EFFICACY?

Equity in education has always been a priority in my personal and professional practices. Now, with all students online, the bridge of disparity for equitable access to education widened beyond levels seen before. Combine this with the social upheaval of inequities spanning the country piqued with the death of George Floyd, it was clear that this was the issue that mattered deeply to both staffs as we were living its impact on students and families in real time. This would be our rallying point to promote positive change within both our regular school and VSP.

RALLYING THE TROOPS

Working with the educational consultant, we laid out a plan for using both staff's core interest in providing an equitable education as the cornerstone of the year's focus. We started the process of rallying around providing educational equity to the best of our abilities. The first step was to acknowledge the challenges to what made education in this day and age equitable for all students. What does an equitable education look like? This was going to be a daunting conversation that could backfire if I was to lead it. It could easily be perceived that I was unrealistically presumptuous, even arrogant, as to position myself as an expert on equity, moral integrity, and justice way beyond my lane as principal, losing my team in the process. It was necessary to have a neutral figure guide us through the heavy, uncomfortable, yet necessary conversations to reach common ground and unify us. Fortunately, my educational consultant had experience and training in this area so she led the dialogue as I participated

and supported it.

As we came to better understand each other through deeply valuable and emotional conversations both staffs were growing as a collaborative team. We talked about race, about our personal experiences with equity and inequity, and with and without entitlement. Then we changed the focus from ourselves to our students. Teachers were provided with their own copy of the book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* by Zaretta L. Hammond. We read parts of the book as a group during staff meetings, which led to rich discussions about topics that were meaningful and impactful, and could immediately be applied to instruction to promote cultural proficiency and best practices.

COLLABORATE ON A SHARED VISION

Once you identify and explore a foundational belief that brings the team together, use it to fuel the collaborative formation of a common vision statement. That vision statement will be the thread of focus in which all those who created it will be inherently committed.

Through this process, both staffs collaborated to create equity vision statements that we still use today. These statements anchored us with a clear vision of where we were going as a collective teacher team, giving us tremendous focus to revisit throughout the school year, and served as noise canceling headphones to whatever else was happening. Now that we were on course toward reaching mutually agreed upon ideals, it was time to focus on the next step.

The vision statement must be used as the impetus for next steps. How will your team

move toward achieving the vision statement? Logically, you will need an action plan. Once a vision statement is created, the expectation is to do something with it. Failure to use the vision statement as nothing more than an exercise in creating it will cause staff to lose faith in your leadership. Our action plan consisted of building community, instilling best instructional practices, and continuing to improve our abilities to do both.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Together, our educational consultant, teacher leaders, Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA), and I created a scope and sequence mapping out the year's progression with the equity vision statements as our guide. We started with building community.

Students and families have strong allegiances to their home school. Students at our physical school were clinging to the familiar and willing to go along with whatever was new to instill a sense of belonging. Those in VSP were struggling to have a collective identity because, out of necessity, it was a hastily built temporary school program.

Our regular school had a chant, so we composed a school theme song for VSP. Our regular school had a mascot, so we held a contest for VSP students to create and vote on one. VSP became the very proud volcanos, erupting with positivity and a can-do spirit. All of this and our weekly newsletters were great, but in a new age of overflowing emails and lack of social connection, these efforts still were not enough to promote an informed and cohesive collective.

Teachers were already overloaded managing the day-to-day of providing instruction during the pandemic. I could not in good faith ask them to take on more responsibilities. Instead, a

college student helped produce separate weekly videos for both school communities featuring new content and student recognitions. Every Monday began with teachers showing the video to students to start their week with a sense of school connection beyond the classroom. Parent feedback was that the videos alone were stabilizing for their families, and parents counted on the weekly ritual and information provided within the videos as much as the students.

COVID IS NOT AN EXCUSE FOR IGNORING BEST PRACTICES

Throughout the journey, I insisted that COVID-19 was no excuse to ignore best practices and relied on our educational consultant to hold me accountable as I was gently doing the same with staff.

Educators are generally very compassionate and sensitive by nature. Some may present tough exteriors, but we are mushy on the inside. We tend to avoid confrontation, difficult conversations, and accountability with our peers. But the principal has to rise above for the sake of the whole school, and that may mean leading staff to do what is in their best interest even if they do not realize it yet. For us, that meant exploring data-based problem solving, goal setting, and Cycles of Inquiry. In isolation teachers often use each of these tools with their students; yet they have not historically been welcome tools for teachers to apply to themselves across the board. That is for the principal to sensitively, but firmly lead and provide plenty of meeting time to apply.

THE DREADED FOUR LETTER WORD: D-A-T-A

As a teacher, I held past negative assumptions about data and knew many teachers still felt that way. The purpose of using data is not for a reflection of teaching competence. Instead, data is another tool in our toolkit to help us help our students. No matter how well we think we know our students, data can still tell us something we may not know, and we can use that information along with other tools to support students. As a result, we collectively dipped our toes in the water to collect and examine data, develop SMARTe goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound, and Equitable), and revisit Cycles of Inquiry, “the ongoing process of reflecting on practice, undertaking professional learning, implementing that professional learning, and assessing impact.” (AITSL, 2020) This was something new, another change. It was not smooth sailing, but it was a start as we added to the trust we were building together.

Continuing to build trust, we started from scratch on our school’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) making sure it was a useful and relevant roadmap for the future. Both staffs participated in root cause analyses, and students, parents, and staff helped shape the intention recorded in the plan. We made sure that LCAP really worked for us, not vice versa—not allowing the plan to be just another obligatory bureaucratic checklist.

Our physical school went from all online in August, to a hybrid model of both instruction online and physically on-campus in March. VSP, of course, remained online for the entire school year. That first full year of the pandemic left an indelible mark on educators with a level of intensity and emotion I do not think can be forgotten. The year’s trials forced our hand to get to the point of what really mattered: new ways to practice and improve our profession.

Despite the twists and turns of separate school sites on divergent paths of providing online

versus in-person instruction, by the end of the school year, for each school we had improved our intentions and actions toward providing an equitable education for students, established a more positive school culture, built cohesive school communities, and developed a stable and growing sense of collective efficacy. District leadership recognized the intentional work we were doing to improve instructional practices and tapped us to embark on a teacher leader training program to better understand assessment data-based problem solving for the next school year.

One of the most important exercises to practice at the end of each school year is to give teaching staff the opportunity to reflect on what went well over the school year, what did not, and what they would like to continue or change for the next school year. Whether this activity itself is practiced in isolation or as a group, it is important to share and discuss the results together, which can easily be the launching point for the first staff meeting of the next school year. It is equally important to collaborate on addressing the responses as you prepare for the coming school year, which means (drum roll, please): a new action plan. A revised action plan that takes the team's desires into account will provide continued clear direction and collective confidence for the school year ahead.

YEAR THREE (2021-2022): A NEW TAKE ON THE ACTION PLAN

As hard as it was to say goodbye to the extraordinary VSP staff, it was a relief to be in charge of one school again and to have students back at school in person from the start of the school year onward. It felt like I was getting the hang of being a principal.

As a staff we were still focused on our shared vision. Our action plan focused on five initiatives

based on mutually agreed upon priorities: Social Emotional Learning (SEL); Guided Language Acquisition & Instruction (GLAD); district assessments; Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS); and equity through cultural proficiency. We would not do anything that did not apply to those five initiatives. The path for the year was set before us with clarity and structure, and I hoped our labors were about to bear fruit.

Given the impact of the pandemic, it was especially important to our staff to address the needs of the whole child by giving students several different outlets of self-expression that was provided school-wide, as opposed to individual classrooms. Expanding enrichment opportunities under the umbrella of much-needed social emotional development was a natural progression.

Like many schools, due to the side effects of social isolation, we focused on students' social emotional well-being as a priority over academic success, knowing the health of the former would lead to the latter. Expanding enrichment opportunities was the name of the game! We had a brand new beautiful library, the launch of a new MakerSpace with weekly STEAM instruction, new weekly theater and art classes, and weekly student-led spirit assemblies rotating different classes as hosts, including Special Day Classes (SDC). These were all additions to district funded enrichment programs. School community feedback was extremely encouraging and teachers saw the value of how these added elements of weekly enrichment were supporting healthy student development. Additionally, artists added beautiful murals to our campus that symbolically represented our school community.

Do not be afraid to hire qualified enrichment instructors who are not certificated teachers. The benefit is that teachers, by law, must remain with the students and are

able to witness the impact the instructor and educational content has on students.

Teachers and students will see each other in a different setting, allowing them to know each other better and strengthen their relationship.

Soon, staff became partners for recognizing and promoting more positive change as they volunteered to take leadership roles to further the school's success. They put into practice what teacher leader colleagues shared from their assessment training during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time, and readily embraced data to improve targeted interventions for whole and small group instruction, and individual student support. They were seeing results, given professional development, and afforded the time to have grade level and across grade level discussions about all students, not just the ones in their classes. We all held each other accountable for setting and achieving SMART goals and appealing to each others' strengths, all the while investing and reinvesting in our collective efficacy.

If the principal wants others to take responsibility for the school, they must share the responsibility of leadership. Give staff opportunities to provide leadership to each other in ways they are comfortable. Let each person carve out their area of expertise and share it. They will appreciate each other's strengths, be more interested in learning from a variety of people, and respect you for recognizing their abilities and being given opportunities for professional growth. Most importantly, staff will be more invested in their contribution and its effect on colleagues, students, and families.

THE PROOF IS IN THE DATA

Our world revolves around data. You can talk a good game, but the proof will always be

in the data. When educators plan for student improvement they review data. When district staff check for compliance they examine data. When district leaders appeal for funding, they refer to data. When principals share LCAP presentations to the board of directors, they include data. Since data tells the story of progress, use it in your favor. Issue surveys, gather quantitative and qualitative data to inform yourself as principal and share the information with the staff and community. Better yet, involve them in recognizing the need and the appropriate way to gather data. Use the results as your guide for taking action and goal setting. Doing so will set the stage for preventing negative surprises and put yourself and your team in a position of proactive problem-solving. The practice of understanding and addressing areas of need will be much appreciated.

Surveys throughout the year provided to various members of our school community showed our intentional efforts to fill social emotional voids and promote growth were effective. The icing on the cake was at the end of the year as district assessment data showed our students' fall to spring academic improvements in literacy (our academic priority for the year) defied the odds of local and state statistics. Now, we had data to prove that our intentional efforts for students' social emotional health and academic success were working. This was cause for great recognition and celebration among staff, and a rewarding shot in the arm to stay the course.

This is not to say that everything was perfect, but overall staff was aligned, morale was positive, students were healthfully achieving, and our school community supported each other. We were headed in the right direction with the intention to keep it that way. For me, this was the rewarding culmination of years of consistent strategic work during historic times that continues to provide great personal and professional satisfaction.

HOW DID WE GET THERE? SHARED VISION LEADS TO COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

Once everyone was in touch with the passion behind their individual “why” then teaching staff could bind their “why’s” together around a collective “why”. With a mutual understanding of their group “why” they collaborated on a shared vision and created a blueprint for how to turn the vision into reality. The principal can foster and support talented staff who, through teamwork, will lead each others with respectful, professional, and bonding accountability toward the collective vision. The process of working toward that vision will lead to collective efficacy.

BREAKING IT DOWN: STEPS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Through the trials and tribulations of these past three years, if I had to break down leading systemic change into simple steps, it would be the following.

- 1. Create a clear and collaborative shared vision.*
- 2. Work together to develop a specific action plan.*
- 3. Be dedicated to the elements of collective efficacy, including considerable opportunities for collaborative data based decision making, shared leadership, and supportive accountability.*
- 4. Lead with consistent methodical intention and support to revisit and maintain focus on all of the above.*

It takes time, patience, and practice to follow through on this commitment, but the

results are well worth it.

YEAR FOUR: MAKE SYSTEMIC CHANGE SUSTAINABLE

The effort of three years of work was finally being realized. Positive change happened and was leading to a happier and healthier collective. Year four's next step will be to make that change an indelible part of the school's culture that endures past my tenure as principal. This is the legacy our school community deserves. After leading positive systemic and sustainable change, I will have come full circle to complete a significant phase of my journey as a new school administrator. I can then become a conduit for helping others do the same. More school communities can realize their vision: the best version of themselves bringing out the best in students.

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