

Kevin Dean - Philosophy of School Leadership

Educating our youth is a complex, challenging, yet ultimately rewarding and transformative experience. It is my mission to see that every child be afforded an equitable and excellent learning experience that meets their needs and challenges them to maximize their potential. It is my work to ensure that every professional in the building works consistently and tirelessly towards these goals. An effective leader is one who practices value-driven instructional, curricular, and community leadership while cultivating collaboration, ensuring accountability, and emphasizing whole-student development.

Value-driven Leadership

I see the leader's role as the individual who embodies the school's values, drives the mission, cultivates and carries out the vision for teaching and learning, and whose actions consistently convey the priorities of the community. The principal must have a set of unflinching core values and use them to inform his decision-making process, to determine resource allocation and school policies, and to make the often difficult yet critical decisions that deeply affect the lives of those he serves. Ultimately, the life of the school is the direct result of the principal enacting his vision in conjunction with faculty, staff, families, the community, and students. The principal is necessarily an ethical leader and must lead by example and determination as he forms the bridge between school and community, between the students as they are and the futures they seek. My core values are excellence, collaboration, respect, and commitment.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Collaboration

For me, instructional leadership is about high expectations, capacity-building, goal-setting, smart data, and accountability. At its foundations, instructional leadership employs the tools of supervision and evaluation to spur ongoing professional growth and consistent student achievement. I aim to model a reflective growth mindset while providing the opportunities for teachers to gain the skills to continually grow via a strategic, relevant, and focused professional development strategy which lives in the work of teacher teams and is rooted in the achievement of all students. Establishing teacher-driven SMART goals and effective, collaborative professional learning communities will ensure that, among the myriad responsibilities teachers manage on a daily basis, instruction is the top priority. I therefore prioritize visiting classrooms, performing instructional rounds, clarifying and communicating a vision for excellent teaching, and celebrating teacher and student success.

By leveraging the experience and influence of senior faculty members and the energy of young teachers, I will be able to guide improvement through recognizing, developing, and harnessing human capital. This requires establishing clear roles and responsibilities while ensuring that teacher leaders are supported and supervised. Overall, to continue improving, teachers must be in the practice of collecting data, reflecting on its implications, and making informed instructional choices – creating the culture for this is the leader's work and decisions regarding resource allocation and daily schedules should reflect this value. Finally, teachers must be respected as the professional educators they are and encouraged to take risks and exercise autonomy when appropriate while ensuring that all students are supported and challenged so that their learning reflects post-secondary college and career realities.

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

A school's curriculum must be relevant, inclusive, frequently assessed, and aligned to learning goals that are rigorous and research-based. Vertical and horizontal alignment are essential and must form part of the core work of the instructional leadership team. An effective curriculum must reflect our diverse world and the character of the community while responding to students' needs in a globalized, technology-rich society where innovation, communication, diversity, and character rule the day. All students must be able to see themselves in the curriculum, be challenged by it, and be afforded the experiences to develop essential skills - their abilities to think critically and creatively, to collaborate, to be resourceful and responsible, to use technology in a responsible and meaningful way, and to communicate ideas and problem-solve effectively. In addition, students must have the habits of mind to succeed at the collegiate level and the content and structure of curricula must reflect this level of study. Furthermore, students must be able to apply their learning, discuss strengths and weaknesses with peers and professionals, adapt their knowledge to real-world scenarios, and have a solid skill foundation to succeed in these areas. Overall, the curriculum helps drive the mission and values of the school and

introduces each student to a world in which they must find their place in order to ultimately improve their own and each other's lives.

Clear and Consistent Accountability

My leadership is also grounded in accountability. In holding faculty and staff accountable, clear goals, measurements, and supports are essential. A transparent and teacher-centered evaluation system ensures that the process is a tool for growth, not resistance or passive acceptance, and can achieve real results. At the core of this work is building strong relationships with teachers that focus on the mission of the school and the community's values. In addition, it is my duty to articulate exactly how and why certain ratings are determined and, should a teacher be deemed in need of improvement, provide the professional development necessary for growth. Nothing should be arbitrary and classroom observations should be free of bias, rooted in measurable data, and focused on actionable ways to improve. To manage my work, I will organize a system of observations, debriefings, and formative assessments to ensure that goals are measured and form the central aspect of each teacher's work. Of course, leaders must also hold difficult conversations, resist pressure to maintain the status quo, and at times terminate employment – I do not take these issues lightly yet know that to serve students is to serve their best interests.

Whole-student Development

It is my belief that the entire school experience must be infused with opportunities for students to learn and develop towards their fullest humanity. This may be in the form of service-learning, student government, athletics, clubs, food drives, or honor societies. Ultimately, we must involve our students in whole-character development so that they may uncover hidden talents, learn the complexities of social relationships, challenge themselves in ways not possible in the classroom, and take risks so that they succeed, fail, make mistakes, and learn from them. Adolescent identities are in a state of flux and an ethical school harnesses this stage of development to cultivate ethical students with strong values who are community minded, respectful of others, and inclusive. This requires strong school values, modeling, and continual reinforcement by all faculty and staff. It is critical to structure a safe and inclusive school culture that responds to crisis in efficient and effective ways, where students and teachers trust one another, and where joy in our endeavor grows with each day.