

Six Strategies for SURVIVING CONSTRUCTION



at Your School

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Editor's Note: Shannon had so much to say in her Fast Five video, we wanted to give our audience all her great tips, which by the way, are great tips for any principal, not just one managing a construction project.

CULTURE CULTURE CULTURE

Don't underestimate the power of a good theme. It's fun for both the students and the staff to have a theme for the school year. This year our theme is—surprise!—all about construction: Laying the Foundation for Learning. We incorporate the yearly theme into PBIS, assemblies, classrooms decorations, student and staff recognition.

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Ensuring School Safety, Planning with Data, Improving Instruction, Engaging Communities

Provide “Welcome back” staff gifts. I found great little construction bags and added bubble wrap for low stress, a yellow hard hat stress ball, and a 100 Grand candy bar since they are worth 100 grand.

Remember to partner with your parent group to provide treats throughout the year.

Leave positive notes in staff mailboxes, or better yet, call home to the staff member's spouse or parent and sing their praises—with them in the room!

ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF

We do so much to support out staff—it's okay to advocate for admin support during a year of construction. Work



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with the business office to come up with creative solutions. We used capital funds and class size reduction dollars to release our principal intern from the classroom in order to support intervention/extension time and the administration.

You can't do it all and that's okay. Prioritize, let go of guilt, set boundaries and stick to them. (I am still working on this.) I keep telling myself it is a marathon, not a sprint. The goal is to be upright in June! Schedule some downtime in your life and give yourself permission to fully enjoy it. Put that out of the office reply on your email!



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FLEXIBLE PLANNING

If Plan A doesn't work, that's okay—there are 25 other letters in the alphabet. I say that jokingly but our after-school procedures are on Plan D or E now. I usually start every conversation or email with, "The plan right now is... but that could change next week." I seem to add this phrase to a lot of emails.

Don't underestimate your need for additional para hours to help with supervision during the day. Extra adult supervision is important while we get those kiddos (and parents) trained up.

Check in with your classified staff frequently—they are often the best eyes and ears of what is going on in all parts of the school and have a good pulse on what is happening.

FREQUENT COMMUNICATION

Weekly (and often more) construction meetings with both the contractor and project manager are key. Creating an ongoing Google doc that is updated weekly and shared with staff is quick and painless. Creating a construction document that staff can add to is an easy way to keep track of the concerns or problems without having to track the principal down. This can also be shared with your supervisor so she is aware of all the moving parts.

Partner with your booster club or PTA to get the word out through print and social media. Building a strong relationship with your parent group will make the year run more smoothly. They can be your eyes and ears away from school when parents talk at the football game.

There is no such thing as over-communication.

HUMOR

Find the silver lining. On the second day of class for our kinders, the fire alarm went off just as we were dismissing for the day. Thanks construction crew—ire drill # 1... check!

“ There is plenty to stress about so laugh about what you can! If you don't laugh, you will cry!”

Construction = closed off hallways and whole sections of the school = mileage. Just think of all the extra exercise you will get as you navigate the school. We have all decided we will be the most fit school when this remodel is done!

Perks of the job: you get to wear a hard helmet and walk through the construction site whenever you want!

There is plenty to stress about so laugh about what you can! If you don't laugh, you will cry!

KEEP IT ABOUT THE KIDS

Living in a construction zone is stressful for sure.

If the kids are safe, enjoying school and learning, that is a WIN any day. So cut yourself a little break, take a deep breath, and take it day by day. You go this! ■

Check out Shannon Ritter's Fast Five video on surviving construction at your school at <https://bit.ly/2Ei8W0j>

