



POWERFUL

Administrative Partnership Practices

EVERETT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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AWSP's Leadership Continuum for principal professional learning guides leaders through their entire career as a school principal.

The health of the school's administrative team relationships directly impacts the school's effectiveness. Roles, norms, and levels of communication must be created and frequently revisited to assure all team members contribute efficiently.

Principals need to think of every assistant principal as a *Principal-in-Training*. Each principal is responsible for effectively mentoring other members on their administrative team. Successfully addressing each of our state's eight criteria

that make up the foundation for principal evaluation requires a high-functioning administrative team at each school.

Here are five key elements in a healthy, effective school administrative team:

1. Assistant principals need the working **trust** of their principal.
- **Trust** they will be given challenging, important work, and supported even as they struggle. APs should not be assigned work that is all routine, or all difficult. APs should have a key role in

planning and implementing the School Improvement Plan, professional development plan, staff meeting agendas, and academic interventions.

- **Trust** their professional well-being is cared for, their actions will be supported, and their good work will be shared with others outside of the school.
- **Trust** they will receive honest feedback and support to address weaknesses, since these weaknesses are public to the entire school community.

- **Trust** their actions will not be micro-managed by the principal, as this leads to second guessing. It is far better for an AP to draft a plan and run it by the principal for feedback than to have every task explicitly dictated.
- When asked, principals need to reply, “Check with our assistant principal. That is his/her area of responsibility and expertise.” This communicates high **trust** to all.

Rate the level of **trust** present in your current administrative team:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Launching
<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastering

2. Administrative teams function best with **supportive structures in place.**

- **Daily check in**, first thing, to communicate emerging issues and the day’s schedule.
- **Weekly strategy meeting:**
 - Build on your relationship, but spend 90% on leadership goals and tasks.
 - Keep this time high priority, with a closed door and no interruptions.
 - Continually work toward alignment and coherence with the School Improvement Plan, District Strategic Plan, Instructional Goals and the professional growth of staff.
- A formal time in the summer to establish the **AP’s professional growth goals** and to identify opportunities for growth. Calendar monthly follow-up meetings focusing only on the AP’s goals and growth.
- Create and publish a **division of responsibilities**. Revisit and rebalance this list as needed throughout the year. Be sure your office staff knows how/where to refer requests on



From Left to Right: Kristin Dickert, Assistant Principal, Mill Creek Elementary; Daniel Natividad, Assistant Principal, Cedar Wood Elementary; David Jones, Principal, Cedar Wood Elementary. All from Everett Public Schools.

the administration. APs split between two sites should only be responsible for one third of the staff supervision at either site.

- Implement a **shared spreadsheet** to record and track discipline issues, since more than one administrator may end up dealing with the same student or family over time.

Rate the level of **supportive structures** present in your current administrative team:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Launching
<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastering

- 3. Principals need to include their assistant principals in **everything**, especially if the AP is split between two buildings. This includes conversations with the custodian, the Reading Specialist, the PTA Executive Board and when planning staff/leadership team/parent meetings. The team needs to conduct and debrief several observation cycles together, and not just at the start of the year. Principals should CC or BCC their AP on emails, since this is where an AP truly learns how a building’s culture and philosophy is put into practice as issues emerge.**

Rate the level of **inclusion** present in your current administrative team:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Launching
<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastering

- 4. Two key items for assistant principals:**
- A. When assigned to a new building, assistant principals must quickly **learn the culture** of the building**
- The school’s culture is communicated by what is and what is not displayed on the walls.
 - It is communicated by what the staff talks about, and doesn’t talk about.
 - It is evident in the staff, student and family handbooks.
 - It is discovered through the small conversations in the building.
 - It is evident by noting who is doing the work, and who is given responsibility. How flat is the pyramid?
- B. Assistant principals new to a building need to identify and make use of a **like-role mentor**,**

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in addition to their principal. Establish a relationship with someone you trust, who is doing the same work, who you can call to say, "This just happened to me. I am dealing with _____. My principal just told me I have to _____." Having someone outside of your building who can offer an objective prospective and serve as a mentor is a key to effective integration.

Rate the AP's **cultural awareness** and **external support** in the current assignment:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Launching
<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastering

5. How can a principal set a new AP up for success? When a building is assigned a new assistant principal, the staff will ask, "Who is this person, and how does this person impact my work?"

- The principal should always speak of the administration as a team, and use both person's names. For example, "As Melissa and I planned today's staff meeting ..." This sets the AP up for success and establishes position and knowledge legitimacy, while building trust.
- Give the new AP key speaking assignments at large and small meetings.
- Be available to teach and to consult. There are scores of new systems for new administrators to learn, from the steps for hiring to submitting a work order to

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managing the school budget and approving purchase orders. Make time to explain and demonstrate these systems as they arise.

- Delegate! This can be difficult when the ultimate responsibility still rests with the principal. It is not an easy skill to master. Ask your AP how he/she is coping, and what they want to work on next. Be a mentor as well as a supervisor. To learn to lead, humans must wade in and make mistakes and then reflect with a trusted partner. This is what we are asking of our students in our classrooms, and is the only way a new AP can gain confidence and prepare for the principalship.
- Be open to new perspectives. A new pair of eyes brings attention to old, ineffective routines and opportunities a principal might otherwise miss. Listen, and seriously consider new ways of thinking and doing.
- Share your processing as you work through a problem. Think out loud, even when you are not certain of what you may decide. This is SO helpful to a developing administrator, and generally leads to a more successful solution.
- Remember a new AP impacts the office systems, too. Set up scheduled meetings with you, the AP, the office manager and others to focus on questions or uncertainties this change created. For example, can the AP give work to the office manager, or does that person only work for the principal? Who schedules appointments?
- Make time for the AP to shadow you in key roles, such as pre- and post-observation conferences. This sends a message to the staff

you are invested in a successful partnership with common expectations. This is one way we can model what we expect teachers to replicate within their grade level and department teams.

- Share the administration's face time with the public, the PTA and other groups. The community will take the principal's lead on how to include the AP in the work of the school.
- Be human. Talk about what you learn, and the way you handle the mistakes you make as you lead the school.

Rate the Principal's intentional support for the AP's integration and success:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aspiring	<input type="checkbox"/> Launching
<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastering

“ Healthy, effective school administrative teams do not exist by accident. They require strategic planning and frequent monitoring.”

Healthy, effective school administrative teams do not exist by accident. They require strategic planning and frequent monitoring. As your team reviews, together, the five key elements listed above make it a point to celebrate the structures you have created, identify areas for attention, and model the open communication that is essential to effectively sharing the responsibility for leading a high performing school.