

The New Principal Speaks

New principals can introduce themselves and set priorities in many different ways—but which is best?

Take One: Hi everyone. I'm your new principal. Ready to serve you, to be everything for each of you. My door will always be open and... (No, scratch that. My door will always be open, but my office will always be empty.)

Take Two: Today marks my first day as your new principal. Now, where should we begin? Do you think there is room for improvement? (Everyone is nodding.) Do you believe you're doing a good job? (Everyone is nodding again. That's a paradox according to Lezotte.) We are going to create an ongoing discourse about making this school a better place. Wait, where is everyone going? Why are you all running for cover? Come back!

Take Three: Today we are going to create a language because without language we cannot communicate. We are going to focus on outcomes while we are doing an anticipatory set, but we'll save time to focus on some subsets, and our goal is to generate a bubbling up because we are all stakeholders, or is it steak holders? Are there any questions?

Take Four: Today marks our first day together after a great Vermont summer. Remember all those objectives you brainstormed last year with the other principal? Forget them. This year we are simply going to laugh a lot and enjoy being together. My number one goal for this year is to make sure that all of you enjoy coming to work

each day and that the kids love school. Madge, would you put away your knitting? Bob, could you save the *New York Times* crossword puzzle for later?

Take Five: OK, folks, the bus is about to leave for a tour of our school zone, and I want all of you on it. Don't worry. On this ride you will not have more work, harder work, or more papers. Oh, and you can't bring anything with you. Sarah, Sarah, Sarah, you may not board this bus with all those curriculum guides. Wait, don't just drop them on the ground. Someone needs to organize the junk. Our motto on this bus is "discard all that stuff and leave the driving to us." So let's join hands and begin our journey to the "comfort zone"—where all of us can feel good.

Take Six: Hi. I'm your new principal. I was wondering if someone had a copy of your mission statement from last year? It's here somewhere in the file cabinet under *M*? Could someone get it out for me? It's not on a 3x5 card? It's too heavy to carry?

Take Seven: We just had a call from the school board. They want us to open the school at 6:30 a.m. and keep it open until 6:30 at night because they want us to take care of the kids—but they don't want us to teach sex education.

Take Eight: OK, staff, now get the kids in order. No, no, not by size. All the kids with reading scores above 85, with a grade point average of 93.9876,

with a father who graduated from college and with a mother who finished high school, and who live in a house, own two cars, have a baby brother and a cat, assign them to the purple room. Yes, Madge? Some of them don't know who their father is?

Take Nine: I'm your new principal, and I was hired because I am very good at filling out forms and making things look good on paper. The board wants this school to win one of those excellence awards. You know, sort of like the back to basics movement. Well, this year they want us to win and to get our picture in the paper and to be popular. So that's our goal for this year. What about the curriculum? We're not going to worry about that. We'll do that some other time.

Take Ten: Folks, let's level with each other. If last year was the pits, and if we repeat what we did last year, then we'll get again what we already have ... pits.

Last Take for Today: Mr. Custodian, Mrs. Community, Mr. Board Chair, Mr. and Mrs. Teacher, Mr. Superintendent ... now hear this ... *From now on, this school is for the kids.* Yes, Mary ... what does that mean? What is "school for the kids"? Let's talk about that ... let's talk about that all year. □

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