

Young Children

MIMI BRODSKY CHENFELD

Just What Is It That Principals Do Anyway?

The kindergarten kids were enjoying a few minutes of free time. Three children were playing a board game when the principal stopped at the doorway and asked if she could join in the game. The four were playing when another child wanted to play.

"This game takes four, and we already have four, dear," the principal explained. The child watched for a few minutes. After a while, she tugged at the principal's sleeve and asked, "Shouldn't you be working?"

Just what is it that principals do anyway?

Kindergarten students are excellent sources of information on this topic—and others. Their ideas and opinions are usually crystal clear, and their honesty (help!) is impeccable.

To assist principals in their often painful quest toward effective leadership, I asked a few kindergarten teachers to ask their students, "What exactly do principals do? What is the *main job* of principals?" Here's what these kindergarten scholars had to say.

An overwhelming number of ideas were devoted to the word *bad*. Here are some representative examples:

Robby: Calls moms when you are bad.

Nicole: Writes notes when people are bad.

David: Takes kids that are bad to the office.

Jesse: Talks to people about being bad.

Dennis: Goes outside and sees who's being bad.

A large number of responses had to do with *things*:

Nikiera: His job is to take films on the VCR of the kids.

Serena: He types and writes.

Amanda: He talks on the telephone when it rings.

Brandon: She uses the computer.

Amy: She signs papers.

Keale: He's the guy who rings the bells.

Probably the most frequently mentioned *thing* kids connect with principals is the PA or loudspeaker. What an impression that instrument makes!

Toby: He speaks on the speaker, and he says, "People on Bus 29 come to the auditorium."

Tyson: He tells on the speaker when it is cold and when it is hot.

Eugene: He talks through the speaker and tells us everything he knows.

You may associate a "teller" with someone who works in a bank, but kindergartners see principals as *tellers*.

Brione: Tells teachers what room to be in.

Darryl: Tells teachers when kids are talking.

Mesha: Tells teachers if kids are bad.

Samantha: Tells kids not to be bad in school.

Allen: Tells you to go in the nurse's room if you are sick.

We all like happy endings so let's end this sharing of kindergarten voices on a positive note.

Bobby: When you are good, he says he is glad to hear that.

Jackie: A principal says nice things to kids.

Ambler: A principal comes to the room and asks the teacher how good the kids have been.

Jeremy: A principal keeps the school in order.

Leigh Anna: She watches the school.

Kennitra: He keeps me safe until someone comes.

Jeffrey: He doesn't let people hurt each other.

Tyrone: A principal teaches people good stuff.

Mark: The principal is my boss.

Parris: The principal is my friend.

Sharee hit on the *most* important aspect of a principal's job. After long deliberation, she concluded:

"A principal helps the secretary."

Now you know what principals do! □

Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld is a teacher and national consultant. She is the author of *Creative Activities For Young Children* and *Teaching Language Arts Creatively*, both published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. She can be reached at 2670 Halleck Dr., Columbus, OH 43209.



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