



Assistant Principal *Ex*celeration

Episode 3, Rhonda Rhodes on the new principal's relationship with existing APs

Rhonda Rhodes is a National Distinguished Principal with Greenville County Schools in South Carolina. An experienced principal, she is in her first year at the Rudolph Gordon School in Simpsonville. RGS is a K-8 STEAM focused school. Dr. Rhodes works with four assistant principals, who are all relatively new to administration.

What are you celebrating: “As much as conflict and static is going on in our outside world I find peace just walking into classrooms and seeing teaching and hearing going on in just a normal environment.”

How does the AP navigate sharing opinions but not being pushy: “Getting to know each other as individuals has been really important... I gathered insight [from teachers] and then we [admin] began having conversations. I cautioned them that each year is a new year.”

“We did instructional look-fors and walkthroughs as a team.”

“We assembled all that data (from asking teachers) compiled those and then created our priorities as an administrative team.”

“I needed to understand their goals... an important part of the principalship is to build leaders”

“We don't want to be the Assistant principal for busses, or the kindergarten first grade, or 7th-8th grade assistant principal... we are one school and the reality is... when they take their next step, they are going to be the principal of a school, not a grade level or a task.”

Advice for APs who want to grow their instructional leadership: “In our team meetings we have an operational side and an instructional side, and we begin with the instructional side... We can fulfill tasks, but we need to talk about the bigger things – instruction and teaching and learning for our students.”

How APs can ask for opportunities to work on instructional leadership: “You say, ‘what are your expectations for me?’ and then you share, ‘hey my career goals are this, how can you help me get there? What can I do to grow professionally? ***It benefits the school but also will gives me the experience to grow to the next level.***”

Tips for AP mistakes to not make: “**Don't put tasks over people** and don't put tasks over goals.” and “We always need to move forward. **If we are taking a road trip, do we use our rearview mirror or do we use our windshield?** ...Anyone can get bogged down in how we did things here... Every school year, whether it is a new principal or not, brings new and unique challenges.”



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What are the signs that a new AP could be a great principal? “Being able to recognize good teaching and strategies. Knowing data - how does it match the teaching strategies that we see taking place, but also, I see those people with great communication skills, **being able to relate to people, getting to know people and solve problems *with* people, not *for* them. When you can bring them alongside you instead of to or for someone, we are growing people...** being visible working with teachers and families and having that two-way communication.”

Masks: “Modeling and leading by example. Being transparent. Not getting involved in the political side, just understanding the policies and procedures... Being mindful of what we can control... You have to know that policy, its not optional... show compassion for everyone.”

“I used to be pretty fast in my decision making... but I have seen it is better to bring people alongside you because we aren’t going to cram anything down anybody’s throats. You have to be slow, intentional, and purposeful with all your decisions.

One person doesn’t have to be “the” leader... how fun is it to create solutions and opportunities... as a team”

“Hold onto your why, this storm shall pass. Have your battle buddies with you.”

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“What a great question for an assistant principal to ask: ‘I want to grow, how can I grow in ways that will support you?’”

“We can make a quick decision but then we will struggle with implementation because others weren’t a part of that [decision], but if we take time on a shared decision, that actually speeds things up.”