

# Moving On From The Classroom: Advice for the First-Year Administrator

Start strong in your new leadership role with these tried-and-true pieces of advice.



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-PORTLAND, OREGON-

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## **Kudos on your decision to become a building level administrator!**

A host of exciting opportunities and challenges lie ahead. In your first year as an administrator, you will help to create a positive school community and culture that seeks to provide top-notch learning experiences for students. It takes a dedicated, committed person to be a genuine school leader, and you're stepping up to the plate in this new role.

Of course, with this move comes new responsibilities. You may suddenly become a point person for your school's toughest problems and its creative solutions. Every day may be completely different from the previous one. Just like teaching, the first year in a leadership position requires fortitude and patience.

As a school that offers several online and on-campus programs focused in leadership, Concordia University-Portland is staffed with change-makers who have decades of experience. So, we compiled this guide to give you practical advice for navigating your first year of school leadership. Dig in, and start strong. You're going to be great.



# 1

## Stay connected to the classroom

School leaders should never forget what it's like to be a teacher. While administrators routinely enter classrooms for evaluative observations, it's also important to remain personally connected to classroom culture. Leaders should visit classrooms to witness and participate in student learning experiences. Know your school's students, see what they're doing each day, sit down and participate in an activity, converse, and laugh. It's easy to become isolated in your office buried under paperwork and budgets, but staying close to the classroom will help you build a compassionate leadership style—ultimately giving you the window and insights you need to make the right choices for those in your charge.

A few tips:

1

Ask your teachers when it would be a good time to visit and participate in an activity

2

Put away your clipboard, and be in the moment

3

As you walk through the halls, remember to smile and say hello

4

Take mental notes of students' names and their interests

# 2

## Practice distributed leadership

Here's the thing, you can't do it all yourself. Nor should you. Leaders who take on too much burn out fast, and the school leaders of today have an extensive range of responsibilities: overseeing instruction, staffing, data management, professional development, discipline, finance—the list goes on. When schools depend on one person to drive change, it's just not sustainable.

Distributing leadership roles gives teachers a voice in school culture and provides leaders with a sound structure of shared responsibility and collaboration. Think of your staff as a deep well of intelligence, capability, and ideas. "Leading is a shared endeavor," says Linda Lambert in her book *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*. "School change is a collective endeavor; therefore, people do this most effectively in the presence of others. The learning journey must be shared; otherwise, shared purpose and action are never achieved."



To read more about moving to a distributed leadership model, [check out this article](#) from management consulting firm, Bain & Company.



## Prioritize your ideas and tasks

First-year administrators often come in with big goals for sweeping innovation and grand change. While that kind of energy is fantastic, remember you can't do it all at once. There will be last-minute tasks to complete, fires to put out, and resources you may have to wait for. And that's okay!

As a professional leader, strategically solve the issues you can in the order that makes the most sense. Utilize your staff and school community to determine priorities together and help achieve shared goals. Set short and long-term goals and plan for the unexpected. Think depth over breadth to make real and lasting change. Remember, change is a process and takes time.

Draft your own Eisenhower Matrix to help you decide which tasks are urgent and important, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, and none of the above.

### A FEW EXAMPLES:



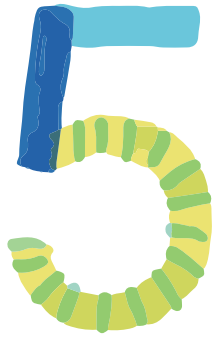
# 4

## Be a good listener

Leaders tend to be fixers, and in busy school environments the need for solutions feels even more urgent. But it's important to slow down and truly listen. When staff members come to you, hear them. Remember what it was like when you were in their shoes. When parents and students come to you with issues, listen intently. Ask questions, take notes, and let them know that you're taking the time to understand. Life coach Cheryl Richardson says, "People start to heal the moment they feel heard." So, don't be in a rush to respond or solve. Just listen, digest, and give yourself time to genuinely consider what is needed to move forward.

## Consider these Stats + Facts

- Studies show that two months after listening to a talk, the average listener remembers only about 25% of what was said. Immediately after hearing something, the average person remembers only about half. (Take notes and encourage others to do the same!)
- According to a data study by the Harvard Business Review, people perceive the best listeners to be those who periodically ask questions that promote discovery and insight, and make the conversation a positive experience for the other party. (In other words, isn't a passive listener.)
- Less than two percent of people have had any formal education on how to listen, according to an infographic by Get In Front Communications.



## Take time for reflection

When every day as a leader is so packed, it can be hard to zoom out and see all you have done. Make it a regular practice to reflect on your work. Take time each week, each month, and each year to pause and take stock of the decisions you've made, situations you've handled, and the progress you've made toward your goals—especially after your first year. Write down your goals and create measures of success, and then revisit them regularly. Evaluate your progress and don't be afraid to change goals that aren't working. Check in with yourself, take a deep breath, and realize you're doing amazing work.

### Self-Reflection Questions for School Leaders

#### THIS WEEK:

- What goals did I set out to accomplish this week?
- What progress did I make on each goal?
- What did I do really well this week?
- What can I do better on next week?

#### THIS MONTH:

- What goals did I set out to accomplish this month?
- What progress did I make on each goal?
- What struggles did I face this month?
- What successes did I see this month?
- What do I need to focus on next month?

#### THIS SCHOOL-YEAR:

- What goals did I set out to accomplish this school-year?
- What progress did I make on each goal?
- What did I do really well this year?
- What have I learned this year in my practice?
- What goals do I have for next year?



## **THANK YOU!**

We're so appreciative that you took the time to read through our advice, but mostly, we're grateful that yet another motivated educator is stepping up to an administrator role—and that you're determined to make your first year go as well as it can.

If you're interested in diving into a graduate program that can continue to enhance your leadership abilities and provide you with more knowledge for your new responsibilities, explore Concordia's programs. Among the many degrees we offer online and on our campus in Portland, Oregon, you may be interested in one of these:



**EdD in Administrative Leadership**

**EdD in Higher Education**

**EdD in Instructional Leadership**

**EdD in Professional Leadership, Inquiry, and Transformation**

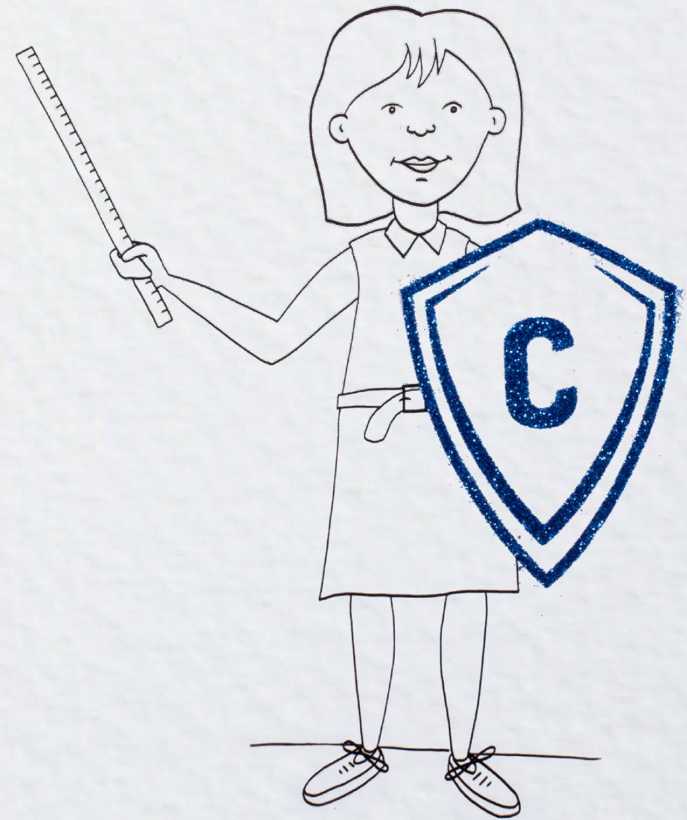
**EdD in Transformational Leadership**

*Please note that our EdD program does not lead to administrative licensure.*

Our EdD program offers five specializations and can be completed in about three and a half years. Classes are available fully online or on campus in Portland, Oregon. Designed for working professionals, our online courses are asynchronous—allowing you to log in at any time of day.

Concordia University-Portland's College of Education has been educating educators for more than a century, because we believe in what you do. Keep on changing the world. We're here to help.

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