

HAVE YOU JUST BEEN
INFORMED YOU ARE MOVING
SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER?



ARE YOU A NEW VICE-
PRINCIPAL BEING ASSIGNED
TO A NEW SCHOOL?



IS A NEW VICE-PRINCIPAL
JOINING YOUR ADMIN TEAM?

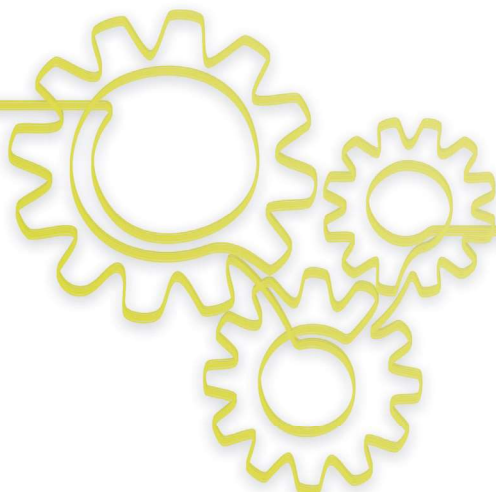


AFTER BEING IN A 'SINGLE-
ADMINISTRATOR' SCHOOL, WILL
YOU BE PART OF A 'TEAM' FOR
THE FIRST TIME?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, on top of planning for the usual smooth opening of your school in September, you will be thinking about how you and your admin partner(s) will work together to support your school community. What are your strengths? What are your philosophies on leadership, communication, and student discipline? Will you get along? Who will do what? There are many things to consider, so invest some time in advance of the school year – if you have that luxury! – to formulate a plan. When you hit the ground running in September, you will have worked out some of the kinks of your new leadership relationship, and determined together your norms of collaboration.

There will never be enough hours in the day for you to operate as a true 'team' on all aspects of school leadership. But, knowing that, there are ways to ensure that you maintain a 'team' approach to your work, and that includes staying apprised of what you each do day to day to support the staff and students in your school, and having clarity on your roles, responsibilities, and communication strategies with each other.

Leaders in single-administrator schools are aware that they are the 'go-to' for everyone: staff and students, parents, district leaders, and members of the community. When a single administrator gains an admin team member, some of those responsibilities can and should be shared.



Building Your Admin Team



by

Ellen Roberts

Director of Member Support Services (Retired)

BCPVPA

● **Key principles to keep in mind as you build your effective admin team include:**

1. **SETTING NEW PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS UP FOR SUCCESS**

A new Vice-Principal will be learning the managerial / administrative and educational leadership components of the role on the job. The transition from a teaching position to a Vice-Principal role is a huge change and presents a steep learning curve. A new Vice-Principal needs time to learn, opportunities to ask questions, time to forge relationships with staff and students in a new work setting, and also time to get to know the Principal and their leadership style. A new Principal will already have a good understanding of the role of the admin team and the shape of the school year, but will no longer have a Principal to whom they can defer when making challenging decisions or taking ultimate responsibility at the school. Intentionality in understanding your teammate's administrative journey and needs is important to establishing a working relationship. This takes time and effort, but it is worth it.

2. **FAIR AND EQUITABLE ASSIGNMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES**

What are the different areas of responsibility? How will you divide them to ensure they can all be managed efficiently, while offering both challenge and opportunity for growth? What strengths does each person bring to their role? While the specific duties of administrators vary across districts, there are certain portfolios that exist at every school. Think about how you can take advantage of the strengths on your team, while building on the 'stretches'. For the sake of the school community, you will want to ensure that roles are assigned in a way that support both a smooth operation and everyone's success. At the same time, it will be important – especially for Vice-Principals – to have an opportunity over time to gain knowledge and experience in all areas of the job so that they have the scope for when they wish to apply for a Principalship. This is a delicate dance, but one that is important to consider.

3. **THOUGHTFUL ASSIGNMENT OF ADMIN TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES**

If administrators have teaching components in their roles, consider what will best support the school, but also – if possible – allow the teaching administrator some flexibility to carry out their administration duties. Giving your first year Vice-Principal an unmanageable teaching load will hinder their progress as an administrator, and will make your job as Principal more challenging. Having a Vice-Principal teaching a subject that is new to them can be beneficial, as it can help their overall understanding of curricular instruction and leadership and ultimately prepare them for a Principal role over time. Ideally, it is a collaborative conversation among the team about what is best for the school and for the individual. There are times, however, where there are limited options available due to factors such as the size of school and existing staffing, and this is where flexibility and resilience are critical.

"Think about how you can take advantage of the strengths on your team, while building on the 'stretches'."

4. CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT DELINEATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES TO STAFF

It helps staff to know early on who is responsible for the various portfolios in the school. Who is in charge of Health and Safety? Who works with the school's support staff and arranges their schedules? How did you apportion the student population for disciplinary purposes? Being clear about staff roles and responsibilities diminishes the chance of a delayed response, and helps alleviate frustration and confusion.

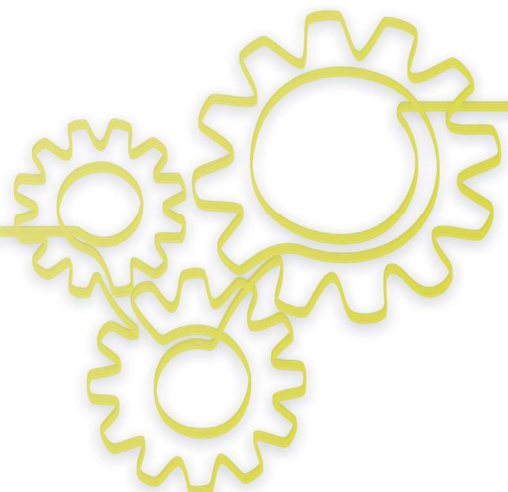
5. ENSURING A 'UNITED FRONT' ON DECISIONS AND MESSAGING TO STAFF, PARENTS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Ensuring that you have a united front is important, as it sets the tone for the whole school. It takes time to know each others' perspectives, as you may not agree on how situations are best managed. However, no matter what, you need to come together and support each other's decisions publicly. If you disagree with your admin partner's approach, discuss your differences privately, but understand that there will be times you will support your partner even though your personal opinion may differ. Your school community needs to see that the team is moving the school in the same direction. Differences of opinion, when shared respectfully and professionally in private, can be a rich learning experience for the admin team, and an opportunity to consider different viewpoints and factors. Ultimately, you want to ensure that you are supporting each other as a team. The Principal will be the final decision-maker at the school, after reflecting on different viewpoints and considerations. A Vice-Principal who disagrees with their Principal's approach can use that as an opportunity to gain insight about their own leadership style and philosophy.

6. SCHEDULED OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEBRIEFS / DISCUSSIONS

Meeting times can be difficult to schedule in your busy school, but it is important. After any school meeting – staff, staff committee, School Based Teams, Parent Advisory Council, assembly – debrief about how the event went, and what you might do differently next time. Don't wait, as the items on your schedule will continue to fill in! In addition, taking a few minutes following lunch-hour supervision, when students are back in class, can be a good time to briefly touch base. Often, we wait until the end of the day; while this is fine, catching your breath in the middle of the day over a bite of lunch forces you to stop and share, even for a few minutes. Intentional conversations can provide rich learning for all members of the team, and a good mentorship opportunity from the Principal to the Vice-Principal.

"Ensuring that you have a united front
is important, as it sets the tone
for the whole school."



7. ESTABLISHED PROCESSES FOR ONGOING COMMUNICATION

If you send out weekly newsletters to staff or your community, establish who is responsible for each part of the message, and set deadlines so you can be confident that the work will be done. If you have a new Vice-Principal on your team, set aside time for coaching/mentoring meetings where the Vice-Principal can talk openly about their experiences and ask questions.

8. COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO SETTING MEETING AGENDAS / PLANNING SCHOOL-WIDE EVENTS

Some school leadership work is immediate, and other pieces – like assemblies or planning for school-wide events – offer a longer lead time. Block off time for discussion as planned events or projects progress to ensure you are on the same page with your planning. Respect each others' deadlines and timeframes, as this will help create a strong and collaborative team.

9. A TRUSTING AND HONEST RELATIONSHIP

This is integral to building an effective and successful team. You do not have to be friends and associate with each other outside of school to be effective as a team, but establishing a relationship built on trust – where you know your admin partner has your back – is critical to the success of your team. Often, conflict can arise between admin partners due to miscommunication, not taking the time to understand different perspectives, or feeling unsupported. This can be avoided when teams are open and honest with each other.

Sometimes there is a temptation to keep something from our admin partner because we worry that the message we are delivering might be hurtful. It is best to be open and honest, even with difficult conversations.

Speak respectfully about your admin partner with your colleagues. You may find yourself wanting to ask experienced colleagues for guidance on effective communication strategies, but remember to do so in a way that is considerate of your admin partner.

10. MODELLING A RESPECTFUL AND PROFESSIONAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP FOR STAFF

Sometimes, team members work well together and develop a casual working relationship. While this is great, it is important to remember that your interactions can be seen and heard by others on staff, and you need to keep your comments thoughtful and professional in order to avoid misunderstandings.

"Respect each others' deadlines and timeframes, as this will help create a strong and collaborative team."

- **When things feel tricky, and you need help or guidance:**

There might be times when you need assistance as an admin team to flesh out a communication strategy that will work effectively. At these times, reach out to the BCPVPA Member Support Services team – we will point you in the right direction, and provide some strategies and resources. You may also wish to reach out to your district staff to request support.

Being part of an effective and strong administrative team can be a rich and rewarding professional experience. Working with a colleague who has a different style can be an opportunity to understand different viewpoints, and can ultimately help to mould you into a stronger and more effective leader. We wish you all the best on your leadership journey, and we are here to support!

Contact BCPVPA Member Support Services

604.689.3399

Toll-Free in BC 800.663.0432

mssinfo@bcpvpa.bc.ca

Find Resources

bcpvpa.org

- Member Support Services

- My BCPVPA

