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ABSTRACT

This keynote address by a school principal examines the importance of retaining the best teachers in order to maintain a high quality of education. This means keeping teachers happy and motivated, since they are the crucial part of most solutions to challenges. Principals expect teachers to be loyal to the school and staff; to be peak performers who teach above and beyond the teacher's manual; and to communicate and teach character (responsibility, self-discipline, caring, leadership, courage, sportsmanship, kindness, respect, loyalty, humor, trust, self-control, pride, goal-setting, creativity, and critical thinking). Expectations include: teachers should also be able to solve discipline problems with the support of the principal; principals expect teachers to be technology literate and to be comfortable using technology in the classroom; teachers should be willing volunteers and should help recruit parent volunteers; an exceptional teacher is the one who can reinforce positive values, beliefs, and goals daily so they become part of the child's fabric; if teachers are going to make an impact on the school, administrators must urge them to advance confidently in the direction they have chosen and encourage them to achieve; principals must trust in their teachers, allowing them complete control in many areas; teamwork is another key to success; and finally, it is important to value the arts in education and allow schools and teachers to include arts education in the curriculum. (SM)

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TEACHERS WHO WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE 21st CENTURY...from one principal's view point

Bonnie J. Pryor

Forty-two years ago in a Professional Adjustments education class at Duchesne College, we were told, "The day teaching becomes a job for you is the day you should quit!" At the time I thought, "Who does she think she's kidding?" But I never forgot that powerful seed planting of Mrs. Page and 30 years after that class, I had occasion to hunt her down and phone to thank her.

As a principal, I have learned, one of our most important goals should be to retain the best teachers. To accomplish that, we need to keep them happy. Why? Because, as the successful principal finds solutions to challenges, he/she learns that teachers are the crucial part of most solutions, whether reflecting back on education in the 20th century or ahead to our schools of the 21st century. It's very simple. We need the best, highly motivated teachers to:

1. Meet the nation's top priority and boost test scores *without cheating*. Principals set the pace, the parameters (like lengthening the math period to a full hour or setting up a "whole school reads on Friday afternoon for an hour") and then have to trust the integrity of the teachers. Reality is that it *is* the teachers who do the work, sweating out the results with us.

2. Then there's the challenge of excellence. We need teachers to motivate-to-excel. How do they do it? By understanding that in addition to their normal teaching they motivate by:

- a) What they say
- b) How they say it
- c) How they act
- d) Posters
- e) Quotes and other tricks of the trade!

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B. Pryor

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We face a financial challenge in our public and private schools and *so* appreciate teachers skills and help in areas such as *Grant Writing* to relieve finances and yet move ahead.

Because teachers are a significant part of most solutions, our expectations are high. A primary expectation is *Loyalty*. We would expect teachers to follow the golden rule and "Do unto others..." I would say, "If your principal is a pompous know-it-all, tell your husband or your mother, *period*. By the same token, you can hope that if your principal thinks you are lazy or an air-head, he/she won't communicate that to even one parent!" We need to remind teacher that we expect them to be loyal to their system and to their co-workers. After all, we all tell the children that everybody has problems at home and they are nobody else's business. They shouldn't come to school and tell their friends that their big brother got a DWI. We need to cultivate that sense of *school loyalty* too.

We expect *peak performance*, above and beyond the teacher's manual, scope & sequence, objectives, indicators or normal assessments. Do our teachers teach CHARACTER EDUCATION? We count on that plus: They DO: they teach responsibility, self-discipline, caring, leadership, courage, sportsmanship, kindness, respect, loyalty, humor, trust, self-control, pride, goal setting, creativity, critical thinking, and dozens more.

That character education, a biggy for the 21st century is taught by what teachers say (coming from the manual or the heart, and from their own experience) *and* what they do. That message is also communicated by the teacher's own body language.

We should ask our teachers: "What are you teaching about *responsibility* when they see you doing a marathon run from the parking lot minutes after you should have been in the building? You know how you teach *caring* when you try

and calm down the dirtiest most obnoxious child in the class when she/he's just received what's probably a well deserved bloody nose? You teach *leadership* when they know you are active in the community and heading up committees with your peers. You teach *self control* when the know-it-all co-worker down the hall comes barreling in your room in the middle of your English presentations and demands to collect late math homework from Joel John, Margaret, and Jacob on the spot. You teach *humor* when you laugh at yourself. You teach them when NOT to laugh when you control your facial expressions, so they'll follow suit when a student comes out with an incorrect but absolutely hysterical answer. That's character education!"

Discipline will always be a challenge and it is a good idea for the administrator to say up front to the teachers: "We expect and count on you to solve discipline problems. You have the right to expect support from me when you need it and as often as you need it! We know raising children today isn't what it was even 20 years ago. We know parenting skills are sadly lacking and today's parents are only as good at raising children as their parents were!"

On another level, when we have tight budgets and our teachers accomplish even more, they are canonized in our eyes.

We have to tell that that when we hire them we expect them to put technology to work: When we talk about education making a difference in the 21st century, we first must concentrate on technology. That's a natural. Today we read that data proves a definite link between connect computer use and achievement. We don't have to be told computers can raise student achievement, but they can also do more harm than good when used the wrong way. When teachers are less motivated or knowledgeable about technology, achievement isn't present?

I was just reading research that pointed out that 8th

graders using computers for drill and practice performed worse than other students on the NAEP. 4th graders whose teachers used computers for math learning games scored higher than others. Children who spent the most time on computers in school did not score any higher than their peers; in fact, they performed slightly worse. This new national study was carried out for Education Week.

Teachers as volunteers are invaluable. I've been spoiled. Mine never say, "No." When we wanted to set up extended care before and after school I asked for a teacher to run it. That way I could give the master key to her. When we decided to open day care for our teachers' children, we asked a teacher to leave the classroom and be the administrator. That eliminated all of my worry for either program. I knew they'd operate smoothly.

These two major programs help boost enrollment and our credibility. Because they are spear headed by our own faculty, the support and understanding they receive is incredible. Seldom do you hear a whisper about the noise coming from day care or the mess left by extended care in the halls, library, and multipurpose room.

Another plus can be the fact that teachers can help recruit parent volunteers, knowing which moms would be confidential about what goes on inside the classroom. Teachers are also a good judge of whose mother would be most productive.

In order to compensate for not having resource rooms, teachers can help engage volunteers for one-on-one tutoring.

Special programs demand more help. Our gifted classes, (Junior League Omnibus Program) call for volunteers in the arts and professions. We've been able to recruit an architect, lawyers, and a cook, to name a few.

Teachers in grades one through eight have managed to

recruit a mother to help with the accelerated reader testing to ease the teacher load. It's a successful program and these mothers do wonders. The students love testing on the computer. A couple moms take off an afternoon a week from work to be available. Others do it around their university classes or schedules.

We have utilized Computer Moms to supervise the annex lab during the school day.

On a different level, let me progress to the fact that I consider the *frosting on the cake* to be the talented teacher who is capable of reinforcing positive values, beliefs and goals, daily, so they become part of the child's fabric. He/she will generally be able to energize students and co-workers/peers too. (It's as easy as giving a helping hand but can make such a significant difference in somebody else's life. It /s simple!

If those two things are present, administrators can look for an impact on the school. Now, those qualities/effort are earned through the support of the administrator. Friendship is a gift that is earned, isn't it? Teachers have a right to expect it as a basic. That being said, let me add, that those teachers who are not satisfied with the status in their building should ask themselves if they have any interest in school law, curriculum building, or school/community relations. If they do, they should be encouraged to go into administration and then they can do it the way they want!

If teachers are going to make an impact on the school administrators must urge them to advance confidently in the direction they've chosen, and encourage them to achieve.

Remember that flexibility is the name of the game, but *trust* is the prerequisite. Teachers have to earn that trust, to do their own thing! I allow almost complete control of in the individual areas to the teachers, providing they cover the scope & sequence required or cover the manual of the

series, if a series is used.

Also crucial to the success of the better schools is the fact that the teachers and staff be conscious of building the child's character because of the rippling effect. That's easier done in elementary school, I realize, but don't ever underestimate the effect of the role models on the secondary school staff. They are the ones students imitate, with whom they fall in love, curse, or talk about positively the rest of their lives.

Teamwork is key too. It's really true that "You can best and quickest succeed by helping others to succeed." I have a daily bulletin for teachers and that quote was in it last week. We have to plant those seeds. (We say we have to tell parents and kids things 10 times; well, we have to tell teachers 3 times because we throw so much at them!)

Our strength is a result of commitment on the part of everyone. Our latest motivator is a poster that says: "TEAMWORK: When we all work together; we all win together." It's a picture of paratroopers descending. My staff has lived that!

Finally, I want to urge you to look at the ARTS when looking toward the 21 century. We all know the arts remain undervalued in many school districts, but this is changing. As far back as 1984, John Goodlad called it when he concluded the arts are not an educational option; they are basic. Goodlad's the author of NNER. That's the national network for educational renewal in which many colleges and universities are so highly visible these past three years)

We see evidence of the value of arts education in theory and research today. The evidence accumulated is testimony to the providential relationship between arts and learning. We as teachers have to acknowledge the fact that the arts share knowledge and truth not gleaned in the study of other subjects. The arts are a way of thinking and knowing that is founded on reasoning and human imagination. We've GOT to

capitalize on that in elementary school.

The success of the whole school is a result of efforts to incorporate music, art, drama, dance, and creative writing into the basic curriculum. According to the College Entrance Examination Board, students of the arts prove they outperform their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test. If they studied the arts more than four years they scored like 59 points higher on the verbal and 44 points higher on the math portion,

How do we get the arts into the curriculum with limited budgets? We educate our faculties and get them to share their expertise.

Our teachers volunteer to direct an act of the annual operetta. One had taught dance at the YWCA; another had a close friend who was talented. She was coerced into a little service. Teachers help each other and as a result by graduation, our children have mastered nine different dances from this one annual project. The bonus is, the teachers enjoy doing the dancing and have a little competition amongst themselves. They help each other with the smaller plays too. Possibly it's just with the costumes.

We all take personal responsibility for the motivation of the music program up through grade 8. Yes, they all have music twice a week. As ours is a religious school, we all help with the liturgical music, seeing that we set the example while at the services!

Let me tell you about Sister Marie Juan, O.P. and how I got my music boot training while teaching junior high. At our August inservice, this newly assigned music teacher, a petite Dominican sister, was on the agenda for the morning session. Music books were passed out and Sister introduced herself and her expectations of us, a sample class, so we could experience how she operated! We did, believe me! After the practicing of several songs, she waltzed to the podium and told us what *she* expected of *us*. There were

1400 children in the school, she reminded us, therefore she'd only be able to meet once a week with each class. "That certainly wouldn't be sufficient to cover the music curriculum." Therefore: you guessed it, we were to spend at least ten minutes each day going over the songs. That wasn't enough! Sister would put a tiny spiral notebook in our mailboxes and the day before she was to come to our class, we were to have placed in her box our appraisal of where we were with each song. It could be as simple as, "Sorry, I didn't do too well with this one," or "The altos are really bad on *Battle Hymn*." You didn't play the piano? No problem. Sister would work with each of us after school until we could.

Thank heaven I had had 5 years of piano. But I sat in the last seat of the second row and thought, "Who does SHE think she's kidding? I'm not going to do that with junior high!" Hmmp! I DID do it and sweat blood every week getting ready for her visit. She was darling. The kids loved her and most of the teachers did. She set the school on fire with the arts. She brought Omaha Opera Youth Matinees to the city and went to all school systems to get them aboard.

She went to our famous local boys high school and told them it was a disgrace they didn't have a band, or any sign of music. She visited the president of this university and summed up the lack of arts on this campus. In short, she made a dent in the city.

At the age of 70, she is now directing a 5 state children's chorus in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, plus about four other projects.

Sister has been gone from Cathedral for about 20 years. We haven't dropped our operetta. We still do the dancing and music festival. We are about the only grade school still attending the opera now at night, but preparing as she stipulated. (The English teacher had a three week unit on the opera and incorporated research, essay writing, sentence structure, note taking, and surveying newspaper

articles. There was even an essay on Manners at the Opera.) It should be noted that Sister's teaching of the opera was a unit shared with music teachers across the country.

I learned many lessons from that woman and highly value her influence in education. I tell her that often. For several other teachers who were *formed* by her, have gone on to be administrators and now have modified their own schools' music programs to highly resemble those of Sr. Marie Juan's.

Twenty-five years after our baptism by *Juansie*, we read the often quoted message from the United States Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley. "The process of studying and creating art in all of its distinct forms defines those qualities that are at the heart of education reform in the 1990's--creativity, perseverance, a sense of standards, and above all, a striving for excellence." We are learning!

It isn't difficult for me to set the pace and example by devoting some extra time to the school. However, my closing admission to you should be the fact that my late husband John used to say, "It isn't fair that anybody should love their job as much as you do, because you have such *low tolerance* for those of us who don't."

I thank Cildie and the education department for inviting me today. It has been a privilege to speak to you and I am impressed with your presence on a coveted Saturday morning.

Keynote speech given at Creighton University, November 21, 1998, at the annual TEACHER INDUCTION WORKSHOP entitled, Educators Make a Difference in the 21st Century.

Bonnie Pryor is in her 26th year of administration at Cathedral Elementary School in Omaha, Nebraska. She has been in education forty-one years at both the elementary and secondary levels. She is a 1985 Nat'l Distinguished Principal, designated by the U.S. Dept. of Educ. She is principal of a Blue Ribbon School, so designated in 1986. She is the past president of the National Catholic Educational Association's Department of Elementary Schools. In 1997 she was named one of the 25 most influential Catholic educators in the country by Today's Catholic Teacher Magazine, Peter LI Company.

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