

become available. We had success recruiting a company, and our school team qualified for a regional event that the company fully sponsored. This was the first time my students had been to a hotel, not to mention dine at a restaurant with cloth napkins.

By bringing in outside programs, students recognize that the entire educational focus is on them. For instance, our 2012–2013 school year suspension days were 420 days lost. However, after joining the school team last year as principal and implementing Love and Logic, District Behavior PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) and a plethora of extracurricular programs, our suspensions dropped to forty-eight school days last year. Our value-added score improved one letter grade in one year, and our performance index also improved. We showed a large gain in the lowest 20 percent of our students. Additionally, by using district programs, such as Dr. Durant's Young Men and Women of Excellence, we were able to connect troubled youth with peer mentors and have team-building programs on the weekends. Having students engaged and looking forward to getting acquainted with their mentors meant students were willing to continue the program. This yielded a 1.2 percent gain in attendance in the first year. In the second year, we looked to further reduce the negative and celebrate the positive. I now have businesses contacting our school to get involved and become a part of the exciting changes that have begun to happen. Community involvement is on the rise and we no longer have a PTO but a Chase POSSE (Parents of Superior Soaring Eagles). Our data wall is one of the first things you see as you enter the building because learning is our top priority. Students, attendance, community involvement, parent involvement, and determination for success are the other goals that drive my position as principal and instructional leader.

Changing the culture of the school is multifaceted. Gone are the days of just watching students during lunchtime and being a presence in the school. Both new administrators and veteran principals all have the same opportunity: the obligation to students and stakeholders to focus on the entire development of the student. This can only be achieved if principals are focused on community resources that lead to community involvement. It takes time to coordinate all of these resources, along with all the other administrative responsibilities, but the rewards are truly worth the time. The individualized educational experience of each student in your school will surprise you with all positive results. I welcome interested administrators and/or teachers to visit our school and witness the above referenced opportunities for our students. As a first year principal, I have only scratched the surface of community resources and opportunities for all involved in our school. The student growth that has occurred becomes our driving force.



About the Author

Jack Hunter obtained his administrative degree from the University of Cincinnati. Prior to his career in education, he worked in private business as a successful chief operating officer in Chicago. Using gained business acumen, Jack recently returned to education and is currently transforming his Toledo Public STEM school into a thriving learning environment as its principal. Mr. Hunter's school has been featured on the front page of the Toledo Blade and is currently involved in national STEM competitions.



EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO SUCCEED

by Jack Hunter

My career started immediately after college in an urban teaching environment. My goal was to become a foundational leader for children from a lower socio-economic background. I knew these children could accomplish anything they put their minds to; they just needed to be empowered to succeed. This became the driving force behind my daily teaching.



As a new teacher, I worked tirelessly to empower the children to see the symbiotic nature of a positive attitude and their self-worth to succeed in school and all activities. The passion my students witnessed led to substantial gains on standardized tests. Students were amazed at the growth that occurred and my passion and drive for teaching was forever instilled.

After teaching for a few years, I was offered a business opportunity. I accepted and worked for a large, private company for eight years. After leading this company through a venture capital acquisition, I gained insightful information about how to run businesses. However, my passion had always been to educate children in urban environments, so I made the tough choice between financial growth and public service. I decided to take my experience and knowledge in business, couple it with my love of education, and venture back into the public sector. I knew I had found my true mission yet again. Once I was placed back in an urban environment, I felt at home, and my passion began to drive my success. I took the same tenacity and goal-driven attitude I had in business and put it to work in the classroom and school. Failure was simply not an option. I made sure students knew my expectations, and I continued to lead with empathy. However, I did not allow students to be coddled or fall short of their goals. My business experience showed the connection between the private and public sector as well as the importance of aligning the private entities and the school system. This kind of re-

lationship has an empowering connection on all stakeholders.

In learning how private businesses work, the experiences I gained prepared me to lead a public organization. The multifaceted nature of a private organization provided me with the structure and processes to implement similar procedures in a school with fidelity. I encourage all leaders to network with the business community. Simple conversations, for example, can lead to initiatives that could result in thirty-plus volunteers coming to your school to mentor students. Discussions with business leaders may open up financial resources that allow you to bring programs to your school to assist with academic endeavors. As academically focused leaders, we have to reach out to anyone and everyone in the community who can become stakeholders and help our children. In my case, I reached out to the Department of Aging to recruit senior citizens to read to students and to the Police Association for afterschool sporting opportunities, and I wrote numerous grants to businesses that traditionally do not fund public schools. A large majority of our wealth exists in the small business sector, yet we spend the majority of our time reaching out to the Fortune 100 for monies. My recommendation is to solicit the small businesses for assistance with funding opportunities. A good example is to solicit private sector employees to assist with First Lego League. With a nominal investment of a thousand dollars, you can start an afterschool Lego competition team. Once a business is involved, you will see more opportunities