



## **Geneva's Guidance: Top 10 School Administrator Empowerment Tools**

In providing training to school administrators throughout the country, the most significant area for potential growth is administrator empowerment. Administrators have an abundance of knowledge but without the tools of empowerment some school administrators find themselves stifled. It's important to empower school administrators to lead.

This list of Top 10 Empowerment Tools will provide your school administrators with the tools to excel in leadership.

### **1. We Have Always Done It That Way**

My response to that statement is generally, "that is lovely, but what does the law or school district policy say?" School administrators must be empowered to "Get Back to Basics". The question they must ask is, "What does the law say and what is best for students." We have always done it this way is not a valid argument, period.

### **2. The State Constitution Gives Me Authority**

The State Constitution authorizes school districts to establish and maintain policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of public schools. Administrators make decisions daily to ensure the safety and security of the school. Empower your administrators with an understanding of the law and tools to explain their decision.

### **3. Do You Really Want to Say, “No Comment”**

Every attorney will tell you that FERPA prevents school districts from responding to allegations regarding specific students or incidents. You have also heard that you are a public official and the school is a public entity and therefore you cannot do much about slanderous comments.

What if you could? Have you ever considered empowering your school administrators with the authority to respond to a media request for comment with a request that the media source provide a signed authorization to release FERPA or confidential employee information rather than saying no comment? If you have not sought current legal guidance and updated your procedures for media and social media responses; your administrators may be tied to 20th Century guidelines in a 21st Century world.

### **4. Do Not Shoot From The Hip**

School administrators are not expected to know all the answers. When we shoot from the hip, we often shoot ourselves in the foot. Empower administrators with permission to find out. Teach them how to respond to a request from parents, employees, community members, advocates, and other administrators when they don't readily know the answer.

### **5. Fear Is Not A Rational Motivator**

If the answer you receive from an administrator is “because I did not want to...” your administrator is motivated by fear. Fear based decision-making prevents administrators from “Getting Back to Basics” and asking the question “What does the law say?” and, “What is best for students?”

### **6. Advocating For Teachers and Programs**

Did you know that students succeed at far higher rates in public schools? Do your administrators know this fact? Despite media stories to the contrary, public schools are excelling in providing education to America's children. Empower administrators to advocate for your programs and teachers. You provide a superior educational experience for children and we do public education a disservice when we do not advocate for our teachers and programs.

### **7. Master of Communication**

The reality is people get nervous when they do not understand what is going on. The further reality is not every administrator is a master communicator. Nervous employees, board members, parents, and other administrators make fear-based decisions when they do not understand what is going on. Empower your administrators with the tools to become master communicators.

### **8. Departmentalized Is Of No Consequence**

The answer “I didn't because that is not my department” is the wrong answer. This often comes up with Section 504 and IDEA Special Education. Empower administrators with the authority to work with other departments to meet the needs of students.

## **9. This Is Our House**

If I have been to one of your campuses your team has likely heard me explain “this is our house.” As the head of your house, you would not allow someone to come into your home and use profanity, destroy property, or jeopardize the safety and security of your environment. Empower school administrators with tools such as the Geneva’s Guidance Civility Statement to ensure that campus visitors and employees respect the educational environment.

## **10. Ignoring A Problem Does Not Make It Go Away**

Years ago, I was asked to conduct a campus observation of a high school English teacher. As I walked into the room the teacher had his feet up on the desk and was reading a newspaper. We all remember the controversial movie *Waiting For Superman*. While these situations may be few and far between, empower administrators to act when there is a problem. We are “Getting Back to Basics” with employee issues as well. The questions are the same, “What does the law say? and, “What is best for students?”

As a closing thought, remember that leading a classroom and leading a campus or department is not always a natural transition. Empowering administrators with knowledgeable and practical advice is the foundation for success. Give them the language and tools they need to succeed because that is what the law requires and that is what is best for students.

Powell, Youngblood & Taylor offers administrator professional development to empower your administrators with knowledge, competence, skills and effectiveness for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Let us help you improve outcomes.