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Interview of Site Administrator

I decided to interview two site administrators: one who is in his first year as an administrator and another who is a 30 year retired administrator who is filling in as a substitute assistant principal for a vacant position. I thought it would be interesting to gain insight from the opposite ends of the spectrum of administration. Both administrators said that the internet is where they access their information about California Education Code and school board policy. Both administrators mentioned that the legal area that they deal with the most is student discipline while the novice administrator cited section 48900 specifically. The novice administrator said that he generally does not deal with legal issues and has been focusing more on effective teaching instruction. The veteran administrator had a similar answer in that he referred to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession when evaluating teachers. With regards to communication with parents, the veteran administrator said that parents have the right to have a good relationship with teachers. The novice administrator said that he involves parents when the actions of the student have a direct impact on the school environment. The veteran administrator said that safety is the priority when considering student discipline. He said that every student has the right to a good education and that the school should strive to develop a strong relationship between school and student. The novice administrator responded to student discipline with the number 48900. The novice administrator said that he gets legal advice from the district’s human resource department. The veteran administrator revealed that he had been involved with several personal lawsuits as an administrator and said that this often comes with the territory. When documenting litigious incidents, the novice administrator said to be specific with names and dates attached to everything. He also mentioned to cite Ed Code, school policy, and board policy. The veteran administrator said to document incidents objectively. He agreed with the novice administrator by saying to write down exactly what happened and do everything possible to get the information from first hand observers. It was also interesting to note that the veteran administrator said that everyone’s opinion should be considered as truth from his or her own perspective. Both administrators use FRISK to document improper faculty behavior. The novice administrator received one day of training in FRISK. The novice administrator said that the best advice he could give to an aspiring administrator is to be familiar with the basics. He said that there are resources available for novice administrators and to find out with whom you can go to for support as soon as possible. The veteran administrator advised a new administrator to read as many education court cases as possible and understand the decisions that arose from those cases.

It was a great experience to hear from two vastly different administrator perspectives in regards to law and education. The novice administrator seemed to focus on student discipline from a highly logical and linear perspective. Every student situation had a rational input with a resulting output. The veteran administrator, however, amassed a wealth of knowledge and experience over time as an administrator. Throughout the interview, he stressed that students are young people who will continually need support and deserve the right to a good education. It was evident that he took a holistic approach to students by taking the entire child’s experience into account when dealing with student discipline. The veteran’s answers focused heavily on the relationships that were forged between teacher, parent, and student. With most every response, the veteran teacher also shared a personal example from his own experiences. . It was apparent to me that he valued the lives of students and continues to this day to advocate for their needs.

As an aspiring administrator I want to be able make decisions from a holistic approach when dealing with students, families, and teachers. Creating trustworthy relationships between these entities are invaluable for student success. The veteran administrator’s biggest concern was that administrators often do not make the difficult decisions when teachers become unproductive. To become an effective administrator I will continue to reflect on my own personal and professional practices and use these experiences to motivate teachers to become reflective instructors that will ultimately benefit students and their opportunities to learn. The veteran administrator also gave me a list of legal references found in school board policy and California Education Code that he uses most often. To further my knowledge in school law, I will need to research and familiarize myself with this list. While I know I have only skimmed the surface of educational law, I know that I have created and will continue to create a network of individuals who I trust can help and guide my future decisions as an administrator.